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James Sprunt Historical Monograph

No. 7.

William Richardson Davie: A Memoir

by

J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, Ph.D.

Followed by His Letters with Notes

by

Kemp P. Battle, LL.D.

1907.

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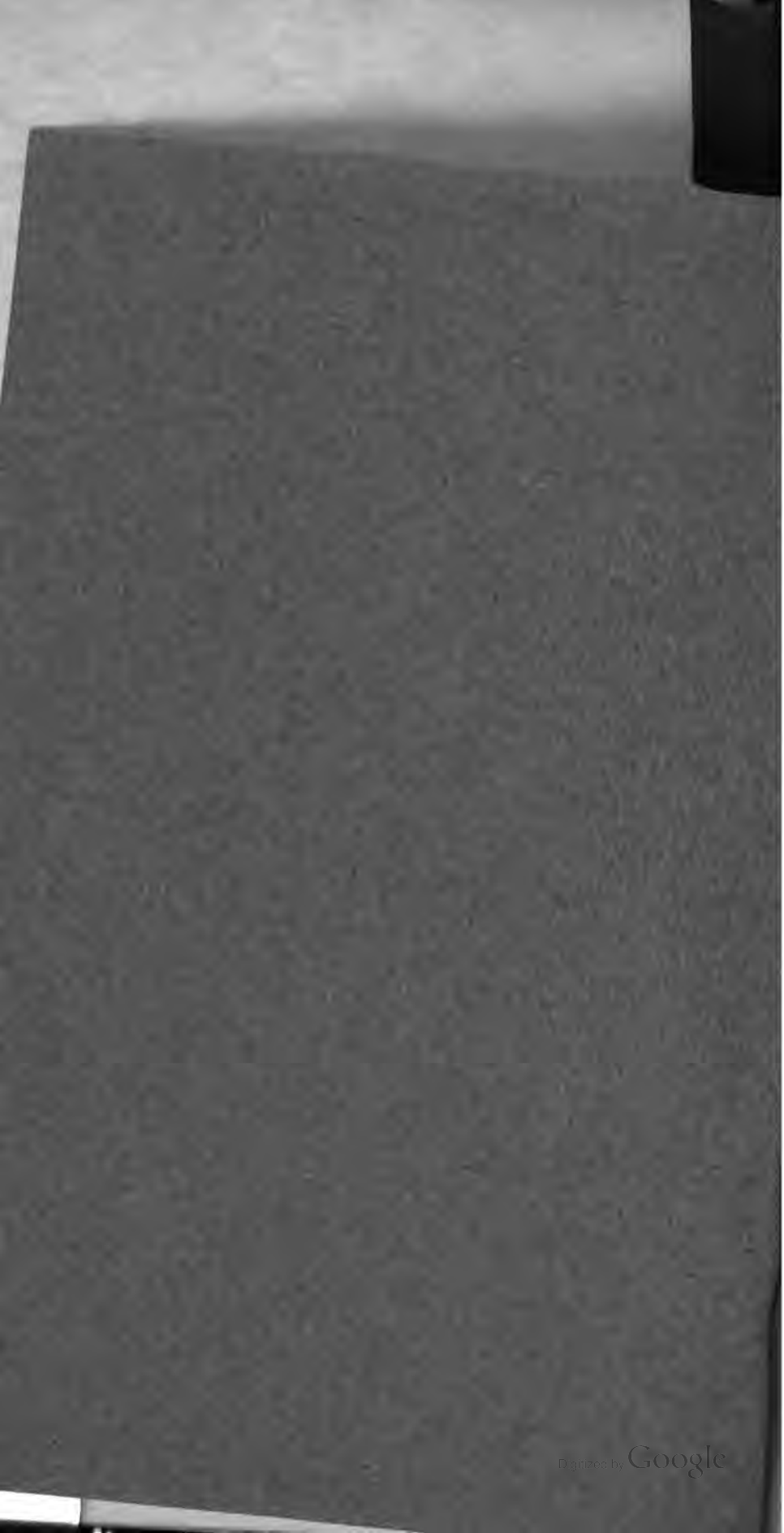
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PREFACE.

In view of Davie's distinguished public services and more particularly, because of his connection with the University of North Carolina, the following of his letters seem worthy of publication. So few of his letters have been preserved that those which remain have an additional value and interest to students of the character, life, and career of "The Father of the University", who is also one of the most distinguished figures in North Carolina history. The letters are annotated carefully and freely wherever they are not self-explanatory.

As an introduction to the letters, there is a sketch of General Davie's life. With Dr. Hubbard's volume in the Sparks Biographies, and Hon. Walter Clark's address at Guilford Battle Ground already in existence and covering the field so ably, the author of this sketch felt some hesitation in undertaking to write another, but as some new facts in regard to Davie had come to light in his investigations, it was thought best that it should be done. He wishes, however, to acknowledge his great indebtedness to both of these writers above mentioned. So constantly have they been used in preparing this sketch that it was impossible to refer to them in the notes. He also wishes to express his grateful acknowledgements to his colleague, Dr. Kemp P. Battle, for much information in regard to Davie and for many helpful suggestions as to the sketch.

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WILLIAM RICHARDSON DAVIE.

As in the case of many others of the Revolutionary charac ters of North Carolina, we lack many facts that would be o interest and value in regard to the life and ancestry of Gen eral Davie. At his death he left more of the material fron which history is written than most Southern men, but nearly all of this disappeared in the wholesale robbery and destruc tion that accompanied Sherman's march through South Car olina. Thus many documents that would throw much ligh on his early life and that would give a clear idea of his char acter, are missing.

He was the son of Archibald Davie and was born at Egre mont, Cumberland county, England, on June 20th, 1756.[1] His mother, whose maiden name was Richardson, named him for her brother, the Rev. William Richardson, at that time a Presbyterian clergyman in South Carolina.

In 1763 the Treaty of Paris put an end to the Seven Years War, or, as it was known in America, the French and Indian War. Mr. Davie then visited America, and among other places went to the Waxhaw settlement on the Catawba river, where Mr. Richardson was living. There he left the son under the uncle's care. The latter had no children and, becoming very fond of his nephew, he adopted him as his son and heir. From this time on, nothing is known of the boy's relations with his father or the rest of his immediate family. The elder Davie was in South Carolina during the Revolution,[2] however, and it is probable that he and his son were in touch with each other.

[1] Some authorities give the date as 1759.

[2] State Records XIV., p. 760.

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Davie's early education was received from his uncle, but he was later sent to Queen's College, an academy in Charlotte. About 1772 he entered Nassau Hall at Princeton. Dr. John Witherspoon was at this time president of the college and was famous for his patriotic ideas. A native of Scotland, he was fond of saying that he had become an American the moment he landed. He had great influence with his students and they imbibed from him much loyalty to the cause of their country which they would scarcely have received from the surrounding population. Nor was his influence confined to his students, for he was an influential member of the New Jersey constitutional convention and of the Provincial Congress. He was later a member of the Continental Congress and signed the Declaration of Independence. In this body he was prominent and his associates found him "as profound a civilian as he was before known as a philosopher and divine." He always wore clerical dress, and when an allusion was made to it, said that he was "God's minister in a sacred and in a civil sense."

The first service that Davie rendered to the patriot cause and his first military service was before his graduation in the summer of 1876, when, with the full approval of Dr. Witherspoon, a party of students, of whom he was one, volunteered for service in New York and were in the army for several months. In the autumn, upon his return to Princeton, he took his examinations and was granted the degree of Master of Arts with first honor.

Before he could reach South Carolina, his adopted father died and Davie was thus left practically alone in the world. He had already settled upon the law as his profession and soon commenced the study of it in Salisbury. He was naturally suited to the profession both in mental equipment and in personality, and soon became much absorbed in his studies. But they were not to continue very long at this time, for in the early winter of 1777, Charleston was threatened by the British and he joined a detachment raised in North Carolina

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and put under the command of General Allen Jones. Th threatened attack being abandoned, the force only reache Camden and, after about three months of service, returne home. Davie then resumed his interrupted studies. But i the autumn of 1878, when it was discovered that the Britis were planning a Southern campaign, the Congress calle upon North Carolina to furnish 2,000 additional troops, an early in 1779 a troop of cavalry was raised about Salisbury William Barnett, who raised the troop[1] was made its captai and Davie became one of the lieutenants. He was commis sioned by Governor Caswell, April 5th, 1779, and immediatel put in command of a detachment of 200 men and sent t quell a threatened uprising of the Tories probably in what i now Burke county. Before his arrival, however, it had beer suppressed. Barnett's troop, upon joining the Southern army under the command of General Lincoln, was attached t Pulaski's Legion, and Barnett resigning soon after, Davie succeeded him as captain and in a short time received his majority.

His first active service was in the battle of Stono, near Charleston, on June 20th, 1779. Davie was seriously wounded and dismounted but he was saved from certain capture and possible death by an unknown soldier who, at the risk of his own life, carried him off the field. For some time Davie was in a hospital in Charleston and his wound refusing to hea he found that military service would be an impossibility fo a considerable period. Thereupon he returned to his lega study in Salisbury.

In September he received his license to practice before the county courts, it being given him, it is said, at the request o Nash who at once sent him to attend the courts on Holston River, then in the western part of the State, in order to find out the sentiment of the people. In the following spring he was admitted to practice in the Superior courts.

[1] Davie is said to have suggested to Barnett that he should raise the troop and to have done most of the necessary work himself.

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But Davie was too full of enthusiasm and patriotism to be content with the business of civil courts when the cause of his country was being tried in the supreme test of arms, and sometime in the spring of 1780 he received authority to raise a troop of cavalry and two companies of mounted infantry. To equip these Major Davie sold his inheritance from his uncle and used the proceeds.

During the summer he and his men took a notable part in the operations on the South Carolina line. After several skirmishes in which he showed great daring and military skill, he took part in the engagement at Hanging Rock and after carrying his prisoners to Charlotte, turned South again, passed Gates retreating from Camdem, and in spite of the latter's wishes, went to the scene of the battle[1] and there saved a great quantity of stores. About this time he was appointed a colonel by Governor Nash and given authority to raise a regiment. While this was being done, Davie moved about the British army with a small force of horse and was succesfful in several minor engagements. His services were of great value, for while there was nothing decisive in the engagements, he succeeded in keeping the British in a constant state of unrest and uneasiness, and thus did much to destroy the morale of the enemy's force. For a time his was the only organized and armed body in the South in active opposition to the British. On September 26th, saying that he would give the British a taste of what Hornet's Nest would give them, he held the whole army of Cornwallis in check at Charlotte for several hours, and though compelled in the end to withdraw, did so in good order. The next day at Salisbury his force was increased to over three hundred men and for the next two weeks he occupied himself in cutting off supplies from Cornwallis, repressing Tories and inciting the patriots to increased efforts. During all this

[1] General Gates wished Davie to turn back with him, but Davie told him that he and his men were perfectly acquainted with Tarleton and not afraid of him at all.

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time he showed his great qualities as a soldier and a commander. Bold and dashing, the ideal cavalry officer, he was ready on an instant to seize any advantage that might present itself and has been fittingly called the Hotspur of the Southern army. But with all his dash and impetuosity, he had great discretion and foresight, qualities for the lack of which many have failed who otherwise would have been great cavalry leaders.

The American success at King's Mountain caused Cornwallis to retreat into South Carolina and Davie followed close behind. But in November the term of service for which his men were enlisted, expired, and they returned home leaving Davie without a command. He was not willing to be idle if he could be of any service and, at General Smallwood's suggestion, considered raising a legion. To obtain the necessary authority he appealed to the Board of War at Halifax. This extraordinary body had been created in 1870 with powers that were in excess of those granted by the State constitution to the governor and commander-in-chief. The Board was composed of Alexander Martin, John Penn, and Oroondates Davis. Between them and Governor Nash there was open disagreement and this caused the latter to decline to stand for reelection. His successor, Thomas Burke, when he came into office, declared the powers granted the Board by the General Assembly unconstitutional and reduced its members to the authority of the governor by the threat of resignation. In the strained relations existing between Governor Nash and the Board, Davie's application was not considered and he abandoned his plan. His opinion of the Board of War has come down to us: "Nothing could be more ridiculous than the manner in which it was filled. Martin, being *a warrior of great fame*,[1] was placed at the head. Penn, who was only fit to amuse children, and Davis, who knew nothing but a game of whist, composed the rest of the Board."

[1] Davie like the other military men of the time made fun of Governor Martin at every opportunity for his alleged cowardice in battle.

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But so valuable a servant was not long to be absent from important service. When General Nathaniel Greene succeeded Gates in the command of the Southern army, he met Davie and offered him the office of commissary from which Colonel Thomas Polk had just resigned, saying it was impossible to feed the army. It was not a position which appealed in any way to Davie whose tastes were all for active service in the field, and in addition, this position involved ceaseless activity, forethought, and responsibility with no hope of honor, reward, or excitement. But ambitious as he was, he never seems to have hesitated about its acceptance, and in January, 1872, entered upon the duties of the office. General Greene soon sent him to appeal to the legislature of North Carolina for men and means, and by that body he was made, first, superintendent of the Salisbury district, and later, Commissary General of the State. The position under Greene, difficult under the most favorable circumstances, was rendered doubly so by the condition of the country and the depreciation of currency, but Davie filled it with conspicuous success. Nor is it too much to say that he contributed as much, if not more, to the success of Greene's army as any man connected with it, not excepting even that gallant and skilful commander himself. He was with Greene for four months and was present at Guilford Court House, Hobkirk's Hill, the evacuation of Camden, and the siege of Ninety-Six. It was during this siege that he was made Commissary General of North Carolina.

Difficult as his position with Greene had been this proved even more so. Troops had to be equipped, supplies gathered and sent South, though the means of transportation were lacking, the people kept from discontent as much as possible, and, at the same time, he was compelled to deal with three governors of different types in one year.[1] At times he was obliged to have recourse to his own personal credit to pro-

[1] Governors Nash, Burke, and Martin, the latter filling Burke's place when he was captured by Fanning.

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vide the supplies which were absolutely necessary for the army. His difficulties were increased by the tax which the legislature of 1781 laid. It was in brief:

"Each and every inhabitant of this State shall for every hundred pounds value of their taxable property (money and interest excepted) contribute and pay to the commissioner of his respective county one peck of corn, or half a peck of wheat, or one peck of rye or half a peck of clean rice or two and a half pounds of good fresh pork, or one and a half pounds of good salted pork, or four pounds of good fresh beef." The collecting officers were authorized to distrain double the amount in the case of a refusal or neglect to bring the specific article to the appointed places. The next year it was increased to one bushel of corn or ten pounds of pork. Like all taxes of the kind, it was doomed to failure in spite of strenuous efforts to collect it. Governor Johnston later said that it was "the most oppressive and least productive tax ever known in North Carolina." Davie was opposed to it, but it must be remembered that through this tax and the efforts of Davie in its collection, the State fed not only its own troops but also those of Virginia. And failure to procure supplies at this time would have probably meant the failure of the American cause. In 1782 the General Assmbly abolished the offices of commissary and quartermaster. Governor Martin wrote Davie that he regretted that he found it his duty to dismiss them. Davie replied, "I am sorry your Excellency should feel a pang on that subject, as they have already dismissed themselves. No man would desire to continue in a service where they reap no recompense but reproach for their most active and zealous exertions." Davie continued in his office until the close of the war and then demanded a strict auditing of his accounts which, in spite of the great volume of business of the office, the difficulties in the way of business methods, and Davie's lack of preparation for such work, proved perfectly satisfactory.

Colonel Davie now resumed the practice of law and in 1783

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went on his first circuit. About the same time he married Miss Sarah Jones, a daughter of General Allen Jones. He also fixed upon Halifax as his place of residence. This town was, at that time, one of the most important in the State and was more entitled to be considered the capital than any other, for the General Assembly met there frequently and it was the scene of nearly all executive business. Davie's practice soon became immense. He was a brilliant and forceful speaker and combined with this a capacity for hard work in preparing a case that made him a most effective and powerful advocate. Judge Murphey, who knew him and had heard him, said, "Davie took Lord Bolingbroke for his model, and applied himself with so much diligence to the study of his master that literary men could easily recognize his lofty and flowing style. He was a tall elegant man in person, graceful and condescending in his manners. His voice was mellow and adapted to the expression of every passion. His style was magnificent and flowing. He had a greatness of manner in public speaking which suited his style and gave his speeches an imposing effect. He was a laborious student and arranged his discourses with care, and, when the subject suited his genius, poured fourth a torrent of eloquence that astonished and delighted his audience. They looked upon him with delight, listened to his long, harmonious periods, caught his emotions, and indulged that ecstacy of feeling which fine speaking and powerful eloquence can alone produce. He is certainly to be ranked among the first orators whom the American nation has produced."

Davie by no means confined his practice to his own immemediate section of the State. He was already well known in the West from his former residence in Salisbury and his later military service in that portion of the State, and to his military reputation he speedily added even a greater one in the law. His successful management of several important cases made his services in demand throughout the State and he

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practiced in all of the seven judicial districts[1] except that of Morganton which was the most western of them and also the largest though most sparsely settled. In his practice Davie did not confine himself to either branch of law. In every civil case of importance he appeared, and it is said, probably with truth, that during the whole period he was at the bar, some fifteen years, not a capital case was tried in North Carolina in which he did not appear for the defence. His contemporaries, too, were far from being mediocre, for among them may be mentioned the names of James Iredell and Alfred Moore, both destined for the Supreme Bench of the United States, Francis Xavier Martin, later to be chief justice of Louisiana, Judge John Haywood, later of Tennessee, and for a short time, William Hooper and Archibald MacLaine. Of these the ablest and consequently Davie's chief rivals were Moore and Haywood. Judge Murphey says that the public could not reach any conclusion as to which was the abler—Davie or Moore.

Among the notable cases in which Davie appeared was that of Colonel Bryan, a Tory, who was tried for treason at Salisbury in 1782. Davie assisted in his defense at the risk of his own popularity, for it was no light thing to side with a Tory when public opinion was running so high as it was in North Carolina at that time. Bryan was convicted and sentenced to be hung but was later pardoned. It is also worthy of note that, in general, Davie was opposed to harsh measures against the Tories, but his opinions and advice were not heeded.

He also appeared in two other cases of such importance that they may be mentioned here. In the case of *Hamilton vs. Eaton* it was decided that the treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain repealed the North Carolina confiscation act, and in *Bayard vs. Singleton* it was held that the courts had the authority and at the same time the obli-

[1] The districts were as follows: Halifax, New Bern, Wilmington, Edenton, Hillsboro, Salisbury, and Morganton.

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gation to declare acts of the legislature unconstitutional.[1]

For some years Davie seems to have taken no part in politics, but in 1786 and again in 1787, he represented the borough of Halifax in the House of Commons. His reputation as a soldier and as a lawer gave him great prominence from the first and he soon justified his reputation by the ability he displayed. In this first session he took a leading part in the debate on the charges brought against the three judges of the State, Williams, Spencer and Ashe.

Much dissatisfaction had been caused in the State by the conduct and decisions of the judges and many charges were brought against them. It was stated that they were constantly late at court and that Judges Ashe and Williams even failed altogether to attend certain courts. Disputes, too, between Judge Spencer and Judge Williams, and in fact, between all three, were said to have so delayed the business of the courts as to convince those having an interest in cases before them, that no judgment would ever be rendered. In regard to their official actions the chief things brought against them were in relation to the cases of Peter Mallet and of Francis Brice and Daniel McNeill, though there were many others. In 1783 Mallett had been accused of treason, but had exhibited a pardon from the governor, and the jury had decided that his rights as a citizen were thereby restored. But in 1784 the court at Hillsboro questioned his right to sue and stayed two suits that he had brought until they could decide the matter and then delayed nearly a year in coming to any conclusion. McNeil and Brice were indicted for returning to the State after leaving it to avoid punishment for treasonable acts. The court without a trial took action against them which practically amounted to a sentence of banishment.[2] After the charges had been made, the matter was referred to a committee on which, among others,

[1] These acts are to be found in 1 N. C. Reports, pp. 84 and 42.

[2] The details of this matter may be found in the State Records, XVIII pp. 421-429, 477-483.

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were Maclaine, Davie, Hooper, and Spaight. The report of the committee was adverse to the judges but the committee of the two houses decided that the judges had not been guilty of any malpractice in office and this report was concurred in by the Commons. Davie entered a protest against the concurrence but the sympathies of the House were with the judges and a resolution was passed which practically expressed full approval of their acts.

At this same session Davie was chosen a lieutenant colonel of the State militia, a position which he held for many years thereafter.

On January 6th, 1787, Caswell, Martin, Davie, Spaight, and Willie Jones were elected as delegates to the Philadelphia Convention of 1787. Of these, Caswell, Martin, and Jones were State Rights men. The language of the act of appointment, however, showed the influence of the conservatives. Jones declined to accept and Hugh Williamson replaced him by the governor's appointment. To fill his own place Caswell chose William Blount. This appointment, changed the complexion of the delegation, for both Williamson and Blount were conservatives and Martin thus remained the only radical.

The Federal Convention opened May 25th. Four of the delegation, including Davie, were present. Blount, who was absent, soon appeared and completed the State's representation. Owing to the comparative lack of knowledge of the deliberations of the body, we know but little of Davie's part in its debates and workings. But from the debates as preserved by James Madison we find that he favored the President's being elected for a long term and then being ineligible for reelection, and when that failed, that he insisted upon his being liable to impeachment for misdemeanors in office. Through his influence North Carolina finally sided with the smaller States and gave the deciding vote for equal representation of the States in the Senate. He also brought his delegation to

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his view that Senators should be elected by the State legislatures. The government was, he said, partly State and partly national and "ought in some respects to operate on the States, in others on the people." It is interesting to know that his first idea of the Senate was that it should represent property. When the debate on the basis of representation came, Davie saw that there was an effort to reduce the representation from the South and at once gave the Convention warning that North Carolina would never confederate on any terms that did not rate the slaves at least three-fifths of the federal population. He ended his speech as follows: "If the Eastern States therefore, mean to exclude them altogether, the business is at an end."

Just before the Convention adjourned, Davie went home to attend the fall courts and consequently did not sign the Constitution. Had he been there he would undoubtedly have done so, and in North Carolina he at once threw himself into the struggle to secure its ratification. With James Iredell he wrote a defence of the Constitution which was scattered over the State. The chief opponent of the new government was his wife's uncle, Willie Jones. The Federalists, as they were soon called, had but little hope of ratification at the time, but they hoped by the debates in the State convention to influence the people for the future in favor of the Constitution. It is to Iredell and Davie that the State owes the preservation of the debates at Hillsboro in 1788, for they prepared them for publication and bore the major part of the expense. But they thereby erected a lasting memorial of their ability and eloquence. If James Iredell was, as it is said, the most conspicuous figure in the body, Davie was a close second to him and of the latter much was expected by his opponents. Porter of Halifax, alluding to him, said, "I expect that very learned argument and powerful oratory will be displayed on this occasion. I expect that great cannon from Halifax will discharge great fireballs among us." Davie and Spaight as members of the Federal Convention

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spoke frequently explaining and defending the Constitution. But their efforts were unavailing against the great State Rights majority, and ratification failed by a majority of one hundred.

The Federalists were not greatly discouraged and continued the struggle with such success that another convention of the State was called by the next Genereral Assembly to meet in Fayetteville, though not until November, 1789. In spite of the great change of sentiment in the State since the last convention, we find Davie, at the time it met, seriously in doubt if ratification could be secured. But the Federalist leaders had shown that, while favoring the ratification of the Constitution, they regarded it as a compact between the States, and this had robbed the opposition leaders of their strongest argument. So the convention on Davie's motion promptly ratified the Constitution and adjourned.

Davie was not only a member of this body, but had, in the meantime, been elected to the House of Commons. This also met in Fayetteville in November and there, on November 12th, he introduced the bill for the establishment of the University of North Carolina. He was an earnest advocate of the education of the young and had already had much to do with the establishment of the Warrenton Academy and was at the head of its board of trustees. Through his influence the University bill was passed in December and he became one of the first board of trustees. Judge Murphey was present at the debate on the bill and says, "Though more than thirty years have since elapsed I have the most vivid recollection of the greatness of his manner and the power of his eloquence on that occasion." Not every able man seeing the greatness of the plan would have dared to urge it upon the legislature and secure its passage, for by many it was regarded as class legislation and there was great fear also of an increase in taxes. But so much the more honor to him, not only for his far-seeing vision, but also for his courage.

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He was very active in the work which resulted in the site being chosen, endowment raised, professors elected, and a proper course of study being outlined. His plan of the course which was employed after some years was an elective system much like the one employed today. He was an early benefactor to the library, realizing the importance of that institution. On October 12th,[1] 1793, as Grand Master of Masons, which position, by the way, he held for seven consecutive years, from 1792 to 1799, he laid the cornerstone of the "Old East" building at Chapel Hill, and in 1798, in the same capacity, he laid the cornerstone for the South Building. In many ways, by numerous acts of service, did he show his deep interest in the young and struggling institution, and well does he deserve the title given him by the trustees as early as 1810, "The Father of the University."[2] In 1811 the University conferred upon him the honorary degree of LL.D., the first in its history.

Davie was again a member of the House of Commons in 1791. 1793, 1794, 1796, and 1798. When North Carolina ratified the Federal Constitution, President Washington offered him a position as district judge but he declined. He wrote Iredell that though he was anxious to escape from "our d–d Judges," the salary was so poor that he could not afford it.

In 1791 the legislature elected him as one of the commissioners to settle the boundary between North and South Carolina and he was chosen for the same purpose in 1796 and in 1803. But the question was not settled until some years later. He was during all this time taking an active and prominent part in State affairs. He proposed a digest of the State laws and James Iredell, at his suggestion, was appointed to do the work. It was through his influence, largely, that the territory forming the State of Tennessee was ceded by North Carolina to the United States. In the

1 October 12th is observed by the University as "University Day."

2 On the campus a fine old popular, one of the original forest, is known as the "Davie Poplar."

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meantime he did not neglect his law practice which was still great. Nor did he confine his attention exclusively to politics and the law, for he was always fond of agriculture and devoted much of his time to his fine plantation in Halifax county. He was instrmental in procuring a charter to drain Lake Scuppernong and his company was granted the title to all the land below low water mark. This plan, it is needless to say, failed.

He still had an active interest in military affairs and was still an officer in the militia. In 1794, when indications pointed to a war with France, Governor Spaight appointed him major general of the Third State Division. In 1797, when by order of Congress, North Carolina raised a force of 7,000 men, Governor Ashe put Davie in command. The next year the crisis had become so acute that the United States commenced the embodiment of an army and Washington was placed in command. President Adams appointed Davie a brigadier general and Washington left it to him to make appointment of officers for North Carolina. During this time Davie prepared a manual of cavalry tactics which were adopted by the State. These appointments show somewhat the light in which he was regarded as a soldier both at home and abroad.

In the winter of 1798 he returned to the General Assembly and was by that body elected governor of the State over Benjamin Williams. He did not serve out his term, however, for during the following summer, President Adams appointed him to replace Patrick Henry, who had declined on account of ill health,[1] as a member of the embassy to France then under the government of the Directory. In September he resigned the the office of Governor. Benjamin Williams was chosen at the next election and the State was thus thrown into the hands of the Republicans. While Davie was governor the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions were adopted and copies were sent to all the States. Davie took the

[1] Patrick Henry died June 5th, 1799.

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ground that the Union was more in danger than the rights of the States and used his influence successfully against any favorable action of the legislature upon them.[1]

In November, with his colleagues William Vans Murray, the minister to the Hague, and Oliver Ellsworth, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, he sailed from Newport on the frigate *United States.*

After a long and roundabout voyage they arrived in France and reached Paris early in March. By this time the Consulate had come into power and Napoleon was First Consul. On April 8th he received them with great courtesy but negotiations were delayed by his going to Italy, and the treaty was not signed until the end of September. The envoys were entertained much during this time and were the objects of much attention from those in power. Davie's secretary, Mr. Littlejohn, in speaking of him, said, "A man of his imposing appearance and dignified deportment could not fail to attract especial attention and remark wherever he went. I could not but remark that Bonaparte, in addressing the American legation at his levees, seemed for a time to forget that Davie was *second* in the mission, his attention being more frequently directed to him." Davie found France agreeable to him in every way. He was a man of great culture and versatility, and was an accomplished linguist, so it can be readily understood that his stay in Paris was a charming experience.

At the close of the negotiations, he returned to North Carolina, and upon his arrival was urged to run for Congress. For business reasons he felt compelled to decline as did he when in 1801 Jefferson placed him at the head of a commission to negotiate with the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, and Creek Indians. But in 1892, the President appointed him to negotiate with the Tuscaroras and he accepted and a treaty was concluded with them.

The next year his party again urged him to run for Con-

[1] Wagstaff, State Rights and Political Parties in North Carolina, p. 37.

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gress, Willis Alston, the sitting member, having deserted the the Federalist faith. Davie consented but refused to canvass the district, thus making a doubtful contest a certain one—of his own defeat. His unswerving Federalism, his opposition to Jefferson and his luxurious habits and leaning toward aristocracy, which was by no means the most ineffective argument against him, were brought forward with fatal effect and he was defeated. Disgusted with politics and his life saddened by the recent loss of his wife, he decided to leave North Carolina. In November, 1805, he removed to a "Tivoli," a large estate he owned on the Catawba River in South Carolina, where he spent the rest of his life in luxurious retirement, entertaining numerous friends and acquaintances and devoting much time to agriculture, and was the founder and first president of the South Carolina Agricultural Society.

In 1813, during the second war with Great Britain, President Madison appointed him a major general in the United States army and his nomination was confirmed by the Senate. But his taste for battle was past and he declined. His last years passing peacefully and happily, he died November 29th, 1820. He was buried at Waxhaw Church, Lancaster county, South Carolina, and above him cut deep in stone is the following well-deserved tribute:

In this grave are deposited the remains of
WILLIAM R. DAVIE,
The Soldier, Jurist, Statesman, and Patriot.
In the Glorious War for
AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE
He fought among the foremost of the Brave.
As an advocate of the Bar,
He was diligent, sagacious, zealous,
Incorruptibly Honest, of Commanding Eloquence.
In the Legislative Hall
He had no superior in enlarged vision
And profound plans of Policy.

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Single in his ends, varied in his means, indefatigable
In his exertions,
Representing his Nation in an important Embassy,
He evinced his characteristic devotion to her interests
And manifested a peculiar fitness for Diplomacy.
Polished in manners, firm in action,
Candid without imprudence, wise above deceit,
A true lover of his Country,
Always preferring the People's good to the People's favor,
Though he disdained to fawn for office,
He filled most of the stations to which ambition might aspire,
And declining no Public Trust,
Ennobled whatever he accepted
By true Dignity and Talent
Which he brought into the discharge of its functions.
A Great Man in an age of Great Men,
In life he was admired and beloved by the virtuous and the wise
In death he has silenced calumny and caused envy to mourn.
He was born in Edinburg[1] 1756,
And died in South Carolina in 1820.

General Davie was survived by six children, three sons and three daughters, and through them he has numerous descendants.

In 1836 a new county, formed from Rowan, was named for him.

From the narration of the leading facts of his life, it is evident that he was a great man and that he was so regarded by his contemporaries. But the question arises, what of his personality? What sort of man was he in his private life? These questions are difficult to answer. Such letters of his as are preserved are utterly impersonal, and yet he seemed to be united by close ties of friendship with many of his associates. It is probable that as a rule he was very reserved even to his intimates, but it is doubtful if he was as cold in nature

[1] A mistake.

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had the reputation of being. The fire of his oratory
l contradict that. In appearance he was very tall with
eatures and eyes full of fire. His voice was resonant,
elodious and capable of every inflection, and his speeches
distinguished for their fiery eloquence. While he was
le debater, he won more through oratory than argument.
ucation and taste far above the generality of his hearers,
equently talked "over their heads." This, however, did
prevent his speeches from always being enjoyed. To
Judge Murphey again: "In the House of Commons he
o rival, and upon all great questions which came before
body, his eloquence was irresistible." He was very
and would not consent to stoop to gain popular favor and
sented criticism of his tastes and habits as an infringe-
of his personal independence. Deeply infected with the
lity prevalent at the time, he never was in any sense a
ous man, but on the other hand his code of morals was
severe and no word was ever spoken against his private
cter. On all occasions he bore himself with dignity,
ered with cordiality to his friends and by them was
ly honored and beloved. The following extract from a
to Dr. Burke in 1782 throws a little light on his tastes:
happiness, though very complete on Thursday last,
have been more so by the presence of some of my absent
s. I should have felt a singular satisfaction in seeing
nlaced from the cares of State,

> 'Mingling o'er the friendly bowl
> The feast of reason and the flow of soul'."

love of reading had caused him to collect a large library
is collection of letters and papers was very large. Some
se were destroyed by his son, but it remained for the
tating horde of Sherman to scatter the rest along the
of the Catawba and add another chapter to their chron-
destruction.
final estimate, Davie must rank well with all of his

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contemporaries in America. In ability as a soldier, as a lawyer, and as a statesman, he may be placed very high. Also in the things he accomplished, he stands far above other North Carolinians of his time, and to many he would seem to be the greatest son, though an adopted one, of the State.

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LETTERS.

HALIFAX, December 16, 1792.

My Dear Sir

I returned yesterday from Newbern, having deferred acknowledging your letters of the 6th and 20th of last month from that place, as you would hear as early from this.

When I got to Newbern the 30th of November I found your name standing on the list of candidates for the appointment of Senator. [1]Martin, [2]Leigh and [3]Blount were also

John Steele, to whom this letter was written, was a citizen of Salisbury, son of Mrs. Elizabeth Steele, who aided General Greene in a perilous time by the gift of a bag of silver dollars. He was a Representative in Congress, Comptroller of the Treasury 1796–1802, State Senator and Commissioner for demarking the line between the two Carolinas.

[1]Alexander Martin of Guilford, born in New Jersey, removed to Virginia, thence to Guilford County; member of the General Assembly 1774 and 1775 In 1776, was Colonel of a regiment, was at the battles of Brandywine and Germantown; was in the General Assembly 1779 to 1782 inclusive. He was Speaker of the Senate; Governor of the State 1782–84 and again 1789–93. He was a good patriotic man and a friend of the University, notwithstanding he wrote poetry which was doggerel. Although acquitted by Court Martial the Federalists continued to charge that he crept into a hollow log at Germantown.

[2]John Leigh, member of the House of Commons for years from Edgecombe.

[3]Thomas Blount, brother of Senator Wm. Blount and John Gray Blount; settled in Tarboro; Representative in Congress 1803–09, 1811–12 and 1821–23. He married the daughter of General Jethro Sumner, whose name, Jacky Sullivan, she changed to Mary Sumner. Blount died at Washington and is buried in the Congressional Cemetary. He was a Commissioner to locate the Capital and Blount street is named for him.

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announced, [1]Lenoir was put up for *Chief* Magistrate, and when I arrived, a strange coalition had taken place between the friends of Lenoir and Leigh, with the heterogeneous assistance of Martin's; the object of all was to diminish your strength—The first ballot was a mere essay; the two Districts of Cape Fear voting intentionally for none of the candidates;—on the 2nd and third ballots these two Districts voted generally for you with Halifax District, and a few friends about Salisbury. Leigh withdrew his name and Mr. Blount then engrossed his 32 votes, this carried him a little ahead; he had 31 before you stood 49 and 52—during this time nothing could equal the activity and scandalous behavior of several of Martin's friends (as was reported to me) not willing to step-forward openly themselves. He found a proper *tool* in your friend [2]M. Stokes, you know his talents and principles. He first secretly, than as it became necessary, openly charged you with *deception* and *duplicity* in your public character, supporting it by the relation of what he called a *fact* viz. "the writing of two letters to two different men, containing different principles and contradictory assertions, fashioning yourself on the political complection of your correspondents. There was nobody who could contradict it, and be asserted it with a degree of confidence which gave it credit and currency. He declared himself the confidential depository of your political views and principles, that they were all aristocratical, etc., etc., nay that you was

[1]William Lenoir. Born in Virginia, 20th of May, 1751 (O. S.), raised in Edgecombe Co., N. C. Lieutenant in Rutherford's expedition against the Cherokees; Captain at King's Mountain; Major General of Militia after the Revolution; President of the State Senate; First President of the Board of Trustees of the University; last survivor of the Charter Trustees; died 1839. A county and town are named for him.

[2]Montford Stokes, of Wilkes Co.; Superior Court Clerk of Rowan County; Principal Clerk of the Senate; Senator of the United States, 1816–23; State Senator and Commoner; Governor of the State, 1830–31 Indian Agent in Arkansas, died 1842.

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the devoted ——— ——— of [1]Hamilton. Martin's friends made a most illiberal use of these reports, and every ballot gained more or less ground; so completely had that wretch poisoned the minds of the Edenton members, that they could not be gotten even to examine them with any patience; (he lodged in the same house with them). Between the 4th and last ballot, the Cape Fear people were shaken by the threats of Martin's party with respect to the interest of Fayette, a meeting took place among the Western Members, in which this threat had its effect, and Martin prevailed. Your friends the made their last effort to serve you, that was by keeping Martin out, he was however elected by a small majority.

[2]Caldwell, [3]Dixon and [4]Beard were zealous and active in your interest, old [5]Matthews I believe dealt doubly by you, the Salisbury and Morgan votes for you would not have exceeded 8 or 9. They left no stone unturned, ——— urged your want of age, not being 30—your *resignation* as they called it, was blazoned into a crime and made great use of—they bestowed upon it the epithets of "vain, pompous, arrogant," etc., etc. Altho' my friend these things *are false*, I know they will be unpleasant, yet it is essential that you should know them. I have therefore detailed them in their original form. I did not hear Stokes assert these things for he carefully *avoided me* every where, but every person men-

[1]Alexander Hamilton, an ardent advocate of a strong government and very unpopular with the Jeffersonian Republicans of North Carolina.

[2]David Caldwell, Senator from Iredell County, probably an uncle of Judge David F. Caldwell, whose father's name was Andrew.

[3]Joseph Dixon, Senator from Lincoln: Major at King's Mountain, afterwards Colonel. After the war General of Militia and Representative in Congress.

[4]Lewis Beard, often Commoner from the borough of Salisbury and afterwards Senator from Rowan. The name is probably the same as Baird.

[5]Musentine (or Mussendine) Matthews, eleven times a Commoner from Iredell; was Speaker of the House; was also a Commissioner to run the dividing line between North Carolina and Tennessee.

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tioned them, and he was publicly taxed with them as falsehoods by your friends.

Edenton becoming entirely detached from you, in the manner I have stated, Mr. Blount taking of course Newbern and a part of Halifax Districts, while Martin remained so powerful in the West-country, and Cape Fear ready to sacrifice everything for [1]Fayette, it became utterly impossible to effect your election. Mr. Blount and his friends behaved toward you with great decency and candor, for this reason and the purpose I mentioned 16 of your friends voted for him on the last ballot. I was damnably mortified it is true, on seeing that despicable creature prevail over you, and I felt for the disgrace and degradation of my country, but every thing is not possible at all times in politics. I am strongly inclined to fatalism of late, and have believed for some time that God almighty made *that man* on purpose to disgrace his country.

As to the business of the [2]Electors it was done among the members of Assembly and nearly settled when I got down, The manner of doing business in the Senate would make men suspect the Messiah. They will never trust any man there twice if they can help it.

The last term of our Federal Circuit Court was lost by the non-attendance of any of the Associate Justices. This circumstance gave considerable dissatisfaction, and has brought the Court into some discredit.

We suffer very much here by the quantity of [3]clip'd gold in

[1]Fayette, or Fayetteville, worked strenuously to secure the location of the Capital. The Cape Fear valley and the country west of it favored Fayetteville, but the valleys of the Roanoke, Tar and Neuse won the prize.

[2]As North Carolina did not join the Union until November 1789 she did not participate in the first election for President. For the second election the General Assembly directed the members of that body from the counties comprising each judicial district to choose the Presidential electors.

[3]Davie speaks of foreign coins. Our coinage began in 1792.

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circulation, every man who takes it by tale is obliged to be cheated. I hope some measures will be taken to remedy this evil.

I hope it will not be forgotten that we have a great quantity of paper afloat, [1]Haywoods, the late emission etc., etc.

Mr. [2]Taylor had introduced a resolution to instruct you not to assume our paper money. I have not heard its fate.

Adieu my friend, let hear from you soon.

I am with great respect
and attachment

My best respects to Mr. Macon and Mr. [3]G—— Yours, etc.
WILLIAM R. DAVIE.

To Honorable John Steele, Esq.,
Philadelphia.

---

[4]MR. BENEHAN'S, July 22nd, '95

My Dear Sir,

I regret exceedingly the various causes which produced

[1]John Haywood was Treasurer of North Carolina, 1787 to 1827. The State paper, called bills of credit, issued during the Revolutionary war, was virtually repudiated, as only $1.00 in good money was offered for $800 in bills After the war new issues were voted from time to time. The Constitution of the United States forbids such issues by the States.

[2]John Taylor was United States Senator from Virginia, Caroline County.

[3]Mr. G. was Wm. Barry Grove, of Fayetteville, Member of Congress.

[4]Mr. Bennehan (Richard), of Petersburg, was selected by Mr. Wm. Johnston, a rich merchant of Hillsboro, to take charge of his country store on Flat River. By strict integrity, intelligence and good management, as well as by marriage, he accumulated a large estate, which descended to his son, Thomas D. and daughter Rebecca, who married Judge Duncan Cameron. As Thomas D. never married, Mrs. Cameron ultimately inherited the whole. Richard Bennehan, and after him, Thomas D., lived on the road between Hillsboro and Raleigh and dispensed a bountiful hospitality. Both were Trustees and benefactors of the University.

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[1]your absence from the board. However as the Arabs say "God would have it so and man must submit", under misfortunes like yours there is no comfort, because nothing can be substituted, the only resource for the human mind in such cases is in a kind of philosophic fortitude, the calm result of time, reason and reflection.

The Business which occupied the board, exclusively of the Examination, I suppose [2]Glasgow has shown you, and also deposited with you the Journal—some of the objects of your letter were acted upon as you will perceive by those papers—the Board of Trustees sat so constantly that the building Com. could do no business.

[3]Patterson became extremely clamorous to be paid for his extra work, the Board being pressed on this Head took it up; but his charges were found so excessively exorbitant, and his work so infamously done, that they referred it again to the Commissioners, I verily believe he has charged six or seven prices for the painting, the rest of the work is on the same ratio.

[4]Mr. Hopkin's bill to my astonishment was almost as bad, so nothing was done in that either.

I am very desirous that we should close our accounts before the meeting of the next board, at least so far as regards the

[1]This letter was written to Treasurer John Haywood, who was one of the Commissioners to select the site of the University. He was a Trustee and on the Building Committee. He had recently lost his first wife, and it is interesting to see what consolation a free-thinker could offer.

[2]Glasgow, who acted as Secretary at the meeting of the Board, was Secretary of State, having held the office since 1776 by elections. He was a militia officer in the Revolutionary war, and so popular that a county was named in his honor. He was found to have been engaged with others in defrauding the State in the issue of land warrants, was tried and convicted, then settled in Tennessee. The county's name was changed to Greene in 1799.

[3]Patterson (James) was a Chatham man. He built the Old East and the President's house, now Prof. Gore's.

[4]Hopkins (Samuel) built Person Hall.

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principal building, the President's House and the Steward
—and hope it will be in your power to have our ion
brought up and

The papers you enclosed to me I lodged with [1]Mr. Alves so that they can be had at any time.

Please let me know whether a receipt is necessary to you for Preand's money forwarded with your last letter.

Adieu, let me hear from you, and be assured no man has a more sincere interest in your happiness than

Yours

[2]W. R. DAVIE.

P. S. I set out for Halifax tomorrow.

HALIFAX, Febry. 26th, '97

Dear Sir,

I feel myself greatly indebted to you for your obliging attention to my boys, and beg you to accept my thanks.

The subject of conferring [3]degrees has been attended with

[1]Alves (Walter) was Treasurer of the University. He was a son of James Hogg, who had the names of his boys changed to their mother's by legislative enactment. He married Amelia Johnston, daughter of a Hillsboro merchant, who owned shares in the Transylvania Company. Hence Alves removed to Henderson in Kentucky, the chief settlement of the colony.

[2]The chief business transacted by the Board of Ttustees at this meeting was the adoption of regulations for the government of attorneys and for collecting the dues of those who had bought confiscated land on credit. This proved to be a source of odium to the institution.

The completion of the buildings began and the erection of the Grammar School were provided for. Apparatus and books were ordered to be purchased.

Advertisement in the North Carolina Gazette for a Steward was ordered. Other business of a routine character was transacted.

[4]From 1876 the University conferred the degree of Artium Baccalaureus (A.B.) for a course including both Latin and Greek; Philosophiae Baccalaureus (Ph B.) for one including Latin or Greek; and Bachelor of Science (B.S.) where neither classic was studied. Recently the faculty decided to grant A.B. for every course. From 1804 to 1876 this degree was granted only when both classics were studied. In 1854 the degree of B.S. was added but not Ph.B. It is remarkable that Davie's Plan of Education should have been so far ahead of his time.

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some difficulty, and difference of opinion, and this difficulty has been occasioned principally by the variation of our plan of education from that of other colleges or Universities. A Bachelor's degree generally imports a knowledge of the learned languages as well as the sciences, to confer such a degree upon a person who understood neither Latin or Greek does not appear to be proper. The ruling or leading principle in our plan of education is, that the student may apply himself to those branches of learning and science alone which are absolutely necessary to fit him for his destined profession or occupation in life, that as you observe "one study does not imply the necessity of any other, unless of one which is necessary to make it intelligible:" but I am well convinced of the utility and policy of conferring degrees, and granting special certificates as soon as a general plan can be adopted; which I think may be done at the next meeting; so that those entitled to a degree or diploma at the November examination might receive them soon afterwards.

My own mind has not been perfectly made up on this subject but I will be obliged to you for your opinion upon the following plan.

That every student who should stand an approved examination upon the English language, and such of the Latin or Greek classics as are directed to be studied, and the sciences, shall receive a Bachelor's degree in the usual form conferred, by a diploma in the Latin language, making a knowledge of one of the dead languages necessary.

That the student who shall pass an approved examination upon the English language, and the sciences as taught at the University should receive a diploma in English certifying his knowledge and progress of the arts and sciences.

That those diplomas should be signed by the President and some members of the Trustees, as well as the certificate of Masters degree, and distinguished as diplomas; that in all other cases certificates should be granted by the Principal of

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the University, especially stating the progress of the student on application made.

I am very anxious that my sons should be taught to dance well, if you approve of the Master who now offers to teach, I wish my sons to be entered by the quarter. There are some French Gentlemen at Newbern who teach dancing in the most elegant stile, they are really Gentlemen and unfortuate refugees from [1]St. Domingo, and I intended upon going to Newbern to see if one of them could be induced to come up and teach the boys, I hope therefore the students will only engage with the present master by the quarter.

I am respectfully yours

W. R. DAVIE.

To Joseph Caldwell, Esquire,
University of North Carolina.

Mr. James Hogg, to General Davie.

June, 1797.

Sir,

In my letter by [2]Dr. Hall I acquainted you that all the classes under Mr. Caldwell and Mr. [3]Holmes had acquitted themselves well, and I think I made particular mention of each class: I was not particular I believe about the classes

[1]The insurrection in San Domingo against the French was in 1791 and 1792. Many wealthy and cultivated planters fled to the United States. Afterwards General LeClere was sent to reconquer the island. His army was nearly ruined by disease. Napoleon obtained possession of the rebel leader, Touqsaint S. Overture, by fraud it is charged, and imprisoned him for life in France. General Davie's sons turned out to be elegant men.

[2]Dr. Hall was probably Thomas H. Hall, M.D., of Tarboro, afterwards a Representative in Congress.

[3]Notes in regard to Hogg, Delvaux and Richards have already been given, also about Caldwell. Holmes (Samuel A.) was first Tutor and then Professor of Ancient Languages in this University 1796-'98. He then became a lawyer and soon afterwards died.

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in the preparatory school. My attendance that morning on a Board of Trustees and attendance thereafter to the concluding examination, from neither of which I could properly absent myself, obliged me to break off my writing abruptly and Dr. Hall went off immediately when the examination was over. I have now set down to make up the defect.

Mr. Delvaux's classes on Sallust, Caesar, Cor. Nepos, Eutropius, and 2 classes on Corderius, seemed to me to be taught with accuracy: It is true they had been prepared but each student drew by lot, the chapter or section which was read. His students also in the French Grammar gave satisfaction. He has a class in the Latin Grammar which was not examined.

Mr. Richard's classes on Telemachus and Gil Blas French Exercises and Fables and in French Grammar made a satisfactory examination. A large class on the common rules of Arithmetic and Practice and a large class in English Grammar in general performed well.—2 classes of Readers and Spellers were examined together, on the forenoon of the 5 day, when every body had made ready to start as soon as it was over. The examination was very superficial, and from it I could not form any certain judgment of the care of the master or proficiency of the students. Some pieces of their writing were also there exhibted.

From several complaints I have heard and some observations of my own, I have been long apprehensive that Reading, spelling and writing have not been attended to with such care as to give general satisfaction. At the same time it will be allowed that some boys have made reasonable proficiency in their studies. Few men that can do these things will submit to the drudgery of teaching reading and spelling.

There were 62 or 63 boys in the Preparatory School, about 20 of whom had for some time past, been taught reading and spelling by Mr. Caldwell and Mr. Holmes, to give time to Mr. Richards to attend to the new French class.

After having taken under consideration the memorial of

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Mr. Caldwell relating to the misunderstanding between Mr. Delvaux and Mr. Richards, the Board authorized the Faculty to find an assistant to them till next meeting. They have in view [3]Robt. Moore who it is thought, will give the necessary assistance for the benefit of free education.—Mr. Caldwell has mentioned to me, a Mr. Murphy from Caswell County, I think, as properly qualified to fill Mr. Delvaux's place, in teaching the preparatory latin classes. I have a great opinion of Delvaux's grammatical accuracy. I am afraid it will be difficult to meet with his equal in that respect.

The more I know Mr. Caldwell the more I am pleased with him. I think him a respectable character and well qualified to fill the Mathematical and Philosophical Chair.—Perhaps he has not studied as attentively Moral Philosophy and the Belles-lettres, but I believe him possessed of talents sufficient. to attain to any proficiency in any science that may be necessary, and I am very sorry that he has notified his determination to leave us. He seems to think that his constitution is too weak, to undergo the anxiety and fatigue of the President's place. At the same time he seems disposed to give us time to lookout and provide a successor.

Mr. [4]Jones told me that he had information from Mr. [5]Collins in Edenton, that our seminary was under disrepute there and Mr. [6]Watters just arrived from the North East, says that the same opinion prevailed there, and that it was mere necessity, made them send their children from that place. It

[3]Mr. Moore (Robert) of Rowan County, stood high in his classes.

[4]"Mr. Jones" is Willie Jones of Halifax, one of the committee to select the site of the University. He wielded a wide influence—was a member of the Revolutionary Congresses and General Assembly, Chairman of the Committee of Safety, Member of the Continental Congress and of the State Convention to adopt the Constitution of the United States.

[5]Collins (Josiah) was a wealthy citizen of Edentou.

[6]"Mr. Watters" (Henry) was a lawyer of Hillsboro, one of the attorneys of the University. The "North-east" was the Albemarle country.

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seems that they think meanly of all our teachers. This seems to confirm Dr. [1]McCorkle's observation.

Mr. Jones was much pleased with our examination and in a short but comprehensive speech, highly complimented the Teachers and Students.

He promised to have a publication in the Halifax paper, to make known, the great proficiency of the students and the promising aspects of our seminary, which I hope has been done. All the papers in the State should be requested to republish it.

HALIFAX, July 19th, '97.

[2]Dear Sir,

I received by the last post your letter of the 29th ulto. it is necessary for me to mention here, how much and how sincerely I regret the resolution you have taken, I had hoped that your situation would become as agreeable to you as it was important to the State. We are all, however, in pursuit of happiness, and it is not for me either to judge for you, or call upon you to make sacrifices which perhaps nothing could compensate; you will observe by the laws it will be necessary to notify the President.

[1]Dr. McCorckle (Samuel E.) was a Presbyterian minister, who had a school called Zion-Parnassus six miles west of Salisbury. He was an active Trustee, delivered the address at the laying of the corner-stone and prepared the first "Plan of Studies." He was elected te but declined the office of Presiding Professor.

[2]Joseph Caldwell was born in New Jersey, April 21, 1773, educated at Princeton; Professor of Mathematics in the University of North Carolina 1796; Presiding Professor for the next year; spoke of resigning but was induced to remain on Gillaspie's becoming Presiding Professor; resumed that office in 1799; was made President in 1804; exchanged that office for the Chair of Mathematics in 1812; again President in 1816; died January 24, 1835; was author of a text-book of Geometry, "Letters of Carlton," advocating the building of railroads, and other pamphlets, especially one in favor of Public Schools.

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I am very sorry that a proper spirit of accommodation does not appear to exist between Mr. [2]Richards and Mr. [2]Delvaux, it seems to me, that in this I may be mistaken, that two Tutors are sufficient for the preparatory school without exposing the scholars to any disadvantage; if assistance is necessary the mode proposed by Mr. Hogg is certainly the most eligible that can be adopted, you can judge with justice and precision what these Gentlemen can and ought to do, and I beg you to give me your opinion.—In the mean time, as no Board has met, we must leave it to the Faculty to manage the matter in the best manner they are able.

I was in great hopes that the Board would have met on the 11th of July so that an ordinance could have passed respecting the manner of conferring degrees, and I intended to have transmitted the draft of an ordinance for that purpose.—Should any of the students be prepared to take their degrees at the annual Examination, proper measures will be taken to remedy any inconvenience that may arise from the want of an ordinance to regulate that matter at present, the Committee and Faculty will be requested to make the proper entry on a Journal for that purpose and grant the candidate a certificate accordingly. The Board will take the business up the moment they meet, and Diplomas will then be issued to those Gentlemen who are entitled to them, this if you please you can make known to the Gentlemen of the Senior Class.

I have conversed with several of the Trustees on this subject, and they generally concur in the principles I once stated to you on this subject, which you can also mention if you deem it proper.

[2]Richards came to America as a sailor, deserted, joined a strolling players' company. At Warrenton he was employed as an assistant in the school of Rev. Marcus George. Then came to the University as Tutor. He was highly regarded. Delvaux seems to have been a good man. Nothing is known of him. He was probably a refugee from San Domingo or a French emigré.

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I am sorry that any mistake should have happened respecting the money paid for the board of the boys; it shall be immediately rectified upon my coming up in October, in the mean time please to complete the payment to the steward or arrange it with him that he may have no complaint.—You will remember the money was in different papers; and I thought that I had recd. eight pounds from Col. Whitaker of Raleigh, and added forty shillings myself to make up the ten pounds; in this however I suppose there must have been some mistake.

I am extremely anxious to hear of the result of the Examination. Believe me with great respect

Your mt. obt.

W. R. DAVIE.

To

Joseph Caldwell, Esquire,
University of North Carolina.

HALIFAX Nov. 14th '97.

Dear Sir,

I received yesterday your letter of the 31st ulto. It is not in my power to give you all the satisfaction I wish in regard to [1]Mr. George; I expected to have received an answer from him before this time in writing but none has come to hand, on my return we had some desultory conversation respecting the business, but he had positively concluded upon nothing, and appeared rather unwilling to leave Warrenton.

A [2]Mr. Rhea of Virginia, to whom perhaps you was introduced by Mr. Jones in July last, will be at Raleigh with the

[1]Rev. Marcus George, a noted classical teacher in Warrenton. He declined to accept a chair in the University.

[2]What is here said of Mr. Rhea is about all we know of him. He became professor of Ancient Languages in the University 1806-1814.

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intention of offering for a professorship. I am told he is a man about middle age, has been teaching about six years, has a family, and is highly spoken of where he resides.—I have never seen him—I have not a word from Gillespie, every effort will be made to procure a proper character, and a man who could be a considerable addition to your society.

Be so good, if I should not have the pleasure of seeing you here before I set out for the federal Court, to write to me by the [1]boys.

I am very respt, yours,

W. R. DAVIE.

P. S. I shall leave this place on the 20th for the Federal Court, if you could so arrange your matters as to stay or spend that time with me here, I would endeavor to render the event agreeable to you.

To

Joseph Caldwell, Esquire,
University of North Carolina,

HALIFAX, AUG. 21st '96.

Dear Sir

I received by the last post your letter of the 19th with the enclosure and will proceed to prepare the answer upon these documents.

I should be very sorry should it be really the case that

[1]General Davie had two sons in the University in 1795, Allen Jones and Hyder Ali, the latter being evidently in the Preparatory Department. Neither graduated and after long interruptions we find Hyder Ali a regular student as late as 1804. Allen was Major in the War of 1812, and his son, Dr. William R. Davie, a surgeon in the Florida war, 1838 His grand-daughter, Mary Fraser, was wife of the late Edward McCrady of Charleston, a sound lawyer and author of a valuable history of South Carolina. A son of Dr. William R. Davie, of the same name, was a Captain in the Confederate army. Hyder Ali left one daughter, who married a Bedon and left many descendants.

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General [1]Person lost his election owing to his donation to the University—but I am informed that his opponents succeeded against him on the charge of nonresidence, this fact was true, that his residence in Granville was merely nominal.

I am very happy that every thing goes on well at the University for a thousand reasons, and that certain croakers may be disappointed.

Make my respects to your family and believe me very sincerely

Yours

W. R. DAVIE.

[2]James Hogg, Esquire,
Hillsborough, North Carolina.

LANDSFORD, CATAWBA, JUNE 11th 1800.

Dr Sir,

We were so much engaged, when I had the pleasure of dining with you, that I forgot to give you the necessary directions how to find my house; the [3]plantation being covered from any view from the great road by a skirt of woods. You will pass at the O.N. ford in preference to the ferry, as it is a good ford, 2 miles nearer, and the ferry is badly kept. If you cross at the ford get directions at Capt.

[1]General Person (Thomas) was prominent as a General of Militia in the Revolution and as a member of State Congresses, was a member of the Committee that reported the State Constitution. He died at one of his plantations in Franklin County. His gift of $1040 in silver dollars for finishing "Person Hall," or the "Old Chapel," could hardly have caused his defeat. History shows that no odium attached to those who helped the University.

[2]James Hogg was a Fayetteville merchant, afterwards moved to Hillsboro. He was a Commissioner to select the site, and then to locate the buildings, of the University. The Norwoods and Binghams of Orange and Huskes of Fayetteville are descended from him.

[3]General Davie called his plantation "Tivoli."

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Heron's to the mill about a mile from the ford, where you will be directed as to the remainder of the road, which is easily found, after you pass two forks near the mill; the road then most deeply marked by the waggons will bring you to the Lands-ford. When you come within a mile and ½ of my house you will probably observe a grave yard, and when you come nearly opposite my gate you will observe a road goes out to the left hand, which in 200 yards brings you to my gate; should you pass this fork, you will soon come to a place too remarkable to pass your notice, the road from Chester Ct.H. and the road from my house, come into the post road (which is the one you will travel) exactly at the same place on different hands. You have then nothing to do but to turn up the road leading to my House, the post is not 250 yds. from my gate: You may perhaps observe a good deal of timber has been cut nearly opposite to the plantation at different times.

My cotton is greatly improved since I left home, as well as the corn—rain however is wanting. You observe how strangely things are working in Spain. "The world was made for Caesar" —— Voltaire, with his [1]second causes, would smile at my superstition but I confess I have no other way of accounting for more than half the events within the last 15 years. Adieu my best regards to your family and believe we with great regards yours etc.

W. R. Davie.

General John Steele
Salisbury.

[1]Professor H. H. Williams gives the following description of Voltaire's doctrine of "second causes."

"The theology of the 18th century is called Deism. And the principle in this is that God is not now in the affairs of the physical world.

"Then if this is so, any event is the result of inevitable law. And this idea applied to human life is Fatalism. Then we lose the great facts of Mercy and Personal Care from God.

"Fatalism appears now sporadically as Materialism."

In other words Creation is the first cause. All subsequent changes are from "second causes" over which we have no control.

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CATAWBA, near Lancaster Ct. H.
September 20th 1800.

My Dear Sir,

When I wrote you last I had no certain advices from the Eastward, nothing but general hopes, etc., I am now informed that our Eastern brethren have decided, and [1]General C. Pinckney has consented to become their candidate, Delaware comes in also, hope was once entertained from having Pennsylvania and Maryland; but on what grounds I know not, much is expected from South Carolina, but as this must depend on the combined and steady efforts of the friends of correct principles, all your aid will be wanting, and I am sure will not be withheld. Nothing can be done *here*, nor I suppose Georgia; and I confess that I do not yet see clearly how this important object can be effected. They seem however to be sanguine; and I will write you as I receive information.

I am afraid the eager vivacity of the federal printers will induce them to exaggerate and excite so much alarm as to produce a coalition of the shattered parties of the other side. would it not be possible to impose some discretion, some prudence upon these people, they are continually sounding the tocsin of alarm.

Adieu write me, and let me know what information you have; and your prospects.

Yours sincerely
W. R. DAVIE.

Genl. Steele
Salisbury.

[1]Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, of South Carolina, was Minister to France and author of the reply to the French Directory, "Millions for defence, not a cent for tribute." He was very popular but the Republicans carried the election. John Adams was the Federalist candidate for the Presidency and Pinckney for the Vice-Presidency. Adams had 65 votes in the Federal College and Pinckney 64, while Jefferson and Burr secured 73 each. The trouble following this tie led to a change of the Constitution.

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HALIFAX,
Feby. 2nd 1801

John Steele Esq.

Dear Sir

I flattered myself with the hope of receiving a letter from you that would have developed some of the mysteries of the day, you will easily imagine how much a man as distant from information as I am must be astonished at some things, the impossibility of reconciling them with any fixed principles, with any connected system of procedure leaves every thing merely conjectural.

My last letters from Congress under date of the 23rd state that the Presidential election is as interesting and as doubtful as ever, that the Federalists own the destruction of the constitution as an event certain under the administration of Mr. Jefferson, and as to the administration of Mr. B.,(Burr) altho' it may be energetic, *no man knows* what course it may take.

I have been visited by a great number of the most enlightened friends of government in this part of the country since my return, they all express an insuperable repugnance to the election of Burr, urging his want of character, etc., etc. [1]In my own opinion it is a measure that will sink the federalists in the opinion of the majority, and in its operation effect the destruction of the Federal party, by becoming responsible for an administration they can *neither control nor influence*, and consecrating beyond all doubt Mr. Jefferson in the eyes of the people.

[1]Notwithstanding the advice of Davie, the Federalists in the House of Representatives supported Burr. Eight states, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky and Tennessee voted for Jefferson. Six states, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Delaware and South Carolina for Burr. Nine were necessary to a choice. Vermont and Maryland were divided, Jefferson was nominated on the 36th ballot. The Federalists from Vermont withdrew to allow that state to be counted for him. Four Federalists from Maryland and one from Delaware cast blank ballots.

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The present crisis is peculiarly gloomy; under Mr. Jefferson, it is said, every institution must crumble to dust, in the administration of Mr. Burr, no man knows what to expect, of course *no man has confidence*, an alarming degree of discontent and disgust pervades every description of society, the public spirit appears to be destroyed by party rage, and the effects of these domestic evils are increased by party embarrassments; in this situation, where the most consummate prudence can only make a choice of evils, it appears to me that the true policy of the Federalists is to act an open, manly and decided part, by yielding at once to the public sentiment, with the best possible grace, and placing the painful responsibility of the *future* where it ought to be, on the *succeeding administration.*

The public mind in this quarter is haunted with apprehensions of dissolution of the Union, etc. pray let me know the state of things.

Enclosed with this is a small package for Mr. [2]Murray, which I would have troubled Mr. [2]Marshall with, but not knowing how long he would Secy. of State, I have taken the liberty to trouble you with it, and beg you to forward it by the first safe conveyance.

Believe me with great respect and esteem your most obd.

[3]W. R. DAVIE.

HALIFAX Feby. 22d 1801.

Dear Sir

The last advices we had respecting the election of a Presi-

[2]Murray (William Van), of Maryland, was colleague of Davie in his mission to France.

[2]Marshall (John), continued to be Secretary of State until the close of John Adams' administration.

[3]The letter was addressed to General Steele while Comptroller at Washington, D. C. He was continued in the office by Jefferson, but resigned in 1802, giving as a reason that he did not wish to remove his family to Washington.

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dent were under date of the 13th when it was said 19 [1]ballotings had taken place without any variation or any prospect of a decision, the situation of suspense and incertitude has produced the most disagreeable effects in this quarter of the Country; the friends of government are seriously alarmed for the Union, and the violence of the antifederal party seems to have no bounds; resentments created and renewed by repeated conflicts have given a stability to certain opinions, and the wild frenzy of a demagogue is admired by the mass of the people as an effort of the sublimest patriotism and it would be difficult to say to what lengths this malignant influence would not carry them; I pray you to write to me and let me know the real state of things, that I may have it in my power to allay in some measure the inquietitude of our friends.

I observe the Senate have passed the [2]Judiciary bill, a great deal will depend on the appointment of these Judges; they ought to be men of known weight of character, and men of active and popular, as well as professional talents; on their exertion will depend in a great measure the cause of Federalism in the Southern States; several circumstances have, you know, given a decided bias to the people fn favor of the other party, and much exertion and address too will be necessary to recover the ground the Federalists have unquestionably lost.

Do me the favor to appreciate my disappointment in not hearing from you by the two last posts, and believe me sincerely

Yours

W. R. DAVIE.

John Steele, Esquire,
City of Washington.

[1]As to election, see preceding letter.

[2]The Judiciary Act, creating twenty-three new Judges, with clerks and other officers, was passed after it was ascertained that the Federalists were defeated in the Presidential election. This legislation was naturally regarded as an effort to perpetuate the power of the Federalists. There

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HALIFAX, Aug. 3rd 1801.

My dear Sir.

I received by the post on Saturday your favor of the 26th ult., and congratulate you upon being again "once more under your own *humble* roof", which, by the by, is the most decent chateau in the neighborhood, ornamented too with no little taste, enough I am afraid to mark you soon as an Aristocrat: if I had attended the treaty in Tennessee, I should unquestionably have had the pleasure of paying my respects to you on my way; but this commission, which would have furnished such a feast for a philosophic traveller, I was obliged to decline.

While I was engaged in the business of my profession my time and attention were exclusively devoted to that business, and my own affairs altogether neglected; my property it is true increased but it was not only unproductive but even expensive to me; under the pressure of professional business I had scarcely time to perceive this circumstance, and it was an object to be felt, some unexpected accounts and charges from my plantations now and then put me in ill humor, but they were paid and forgotten—When I was appointed Governor of the State, I supposed that the usual course of office of three years would give me time enough to

was also much animosity against certain Federal Judges because of their overbearing conduct in the prosecutions under the Alien and Sedition laws. The first Congress under Jefferson repealed the Judiciary Act and the "midnight judges" lost their places.

[1]General Davie, in June 1801, was appointed head of a Commission, the other members being General James Wilkinson and Benjamin Hawkins, once United States Senator, then Indian Agent, to negotiate with the Creeks and other Indians for cessions of land. This appointment was declined. In 1802 President Jefferson commissioned him to represent the United States in the negotiation for a treaty between North Carolina and the Tuscaroras for the disposal of the Indian Lands in Bertie County, which had been ceded to them for good conduct. In pursuance of a treaty made in 1802 the Indians then in that county removed to New York and became a part of the "Six Nations."

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bestow order and arrangement on the affairs of my estate; however before any thing was affected, I was obliged to go to Europe, our mission was prolonged there far beyond my expectations, and my directions were not predicted on an absence of such length; my overseers, as is usual, were contented with having an excuse, and my affairs fell back into the same state of neglect and confusion that they were in when I quitted my profession: my time since my return or rather since the spring has been entirely devoted to this important object, my arrangements reached of course thro' the year, and then my personal engagements oblige me to be stationary here till the 15th of October, excepting a journey to Edenton and Petersburg, and from the 15th of October to the last of November, I had engaged to be in Chatham and South Carolina; so that it was impossible to attend any of the treaties for which I was appointed a Commisssioner—as my affairs therefore would not admit of any arrangement that could enable me to be absent until December my acceptance was at once out of the question. This business being then decided by circumstances over which I had no control left my own judgment without any responsibility; there was however great difference of opinion among my friends with regard to the acceptance of the appointment; my Federal friends were generally violently opposed to my acceptance, while those who are attached to the present administration discovered great anxiety that I should accept the appointment and attend some of the treaties at least; it is unnecessary to trouble you with their reasons, you will not be mistaken in their substance, but I entreat you to give me your sinecre opinion, you are sensible of the high esteem I have for your judgment, and the manner in which I appreciate your friendship. In cases of this kind it is a matter of mere chance, whather a man forms a correct judgment himself and therefore ought to rest implicitly on the judgment of his best informed friends.

You will have returned again to the seat of government before I shall pass thro' Salisbury in October, I wish most

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sincerely you could return this way, we might have an opportunity of comparing our ideas respecting the present and future state of things, little can be done in the narrow range of a letter in taking views which at once must comprehend so many objects.

I am sorry to hear thro' judge [1]Macay that your crops were nearly lost for want of rain, the seasons here have been remarkably favorable and crops never more promising—no never—. G. Britain seems to triumph every where, never has she displayed more vigor, never was she in a condition to make so honorable and advantageous a peace—The Judge tells me that you informed him that our affairs are likely to be settled here. My respects to [2]Mrs. Steele and the family and believe me very sincerely and respectfully,

Yours,
W. R. DAVIE.

HALIFAX, DEC. 27th 1801.

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to acknowledge your letter of the 9th and thank you for the information it contained respecting the business of the Legislative session. I was not sanguine as to the passage of the bill repealing the [3]Gothic law of the

[1]In 1790 the state was divided into two Ridings, two Judges in each. Spruce Macay of Salisbury was added as the new Judge. Previous to 1790 there were only three Judges.

[2]Mrs. Steele was Mary Nesfield of Fayetteville. She had three daughters; Ann, wife of General Jesse A. Pearson, Margaret, who married Stephen L. Ferrand, M.D., and was grandmother of Hon. John Steele Henderson, and thirdly, Eliza, wife of Colonel Robert MacNamare.

[3]The Gothic law referred to was that repealing the grant of escheated lands to the University, and also balances due for confiscated lands. This was repealed in 1805, so far only as to escheats. The chief hope of the institution was escheated warrants, to be located in Tennessee, and hence General Davie's harsh word, Gothic, as expression of robbery. Public taste seems to have changed to Vandals, as representing the fierce plunderers of mediaeval times.

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prceeeding session, but I considered the support it received as a proof of the condition of the public mind and the progress of reason; a sort of Gothic ignorance and political fanaticism are the fashionable order of the day; these infectious moral evils like the fellow fever and the plague have their limits, some invisible power has always said, "so far shalt thou go and no farther."—They interrupt for a time the progress of nature or society, after which they again resume their march, and become progressional; Every man really attached to the liberties of his Country, every sincere republican must sincerely lament this sort of suicide consummated by the Legislature, ignorance and despotism, are as certain contemporaries and relatives as light and Liberty.

I hope you had the pleasure to find Mrs. Eaton quite well and that you enjoy all the pleasures of the season, you have yet no cases to trouble you—enjoy while you may, "to enjoy is to obey."

Our respects to Mrs. Eaton and believe me very sincerely and respectfully

Yours

W. R. DAVIE.

'M Maj. John R. Eaton,
Granville, N. C.

HALIFAX, Jany. 7th 1802.

My Dear Sir,

I am very much obliged to you for your letter of the 22nd of November and the inclosure since; I am not surprised that a mind accustomed to look forward should feel a little gloomy on reviewing the prospect before us, the mind is no doubt

[1]Major John R. Eaton was son of Colonel Charles R. Eaton, a militia officer of the Revolution. Major Eaton was a wealthy and hospitable citizen, repeatedly a member of the General Assembly from Granville He was a breeder of fine horses, one of them, Columbus, at the sale after his death, bringing $10,000.

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invariably affected by the state of things around it, "a snowy day," an easterly wind, cannot fail to have their effect; without these physical aids our political hemisphere is always sufficiently charged with chilling and gloomy matter to excite the most unpleasant sensations.

You know my temperament is not of the melancholy kind, and you will not suspect me of being hypochondrical, when I say that *we shall never see one clear day*; and the highest graduation of our happiness will be marked by the observations, that "there are flying clouds."—The last violent struggle between the parties left the public Nerves in a state of morbid irritation and it will be long before they will again resume a firm and healthy tone.

A correspondent of mine who belongs to the corps diplomatique writes to me that it is positively asserted by some, who have good means of knowing and no motives to mislead that Lousiana has been ceded by Spain to [1]France, that this measure cannot fail to connect with it that train of policy, and views you mention, for my own part I would have risked a great deal to secure the Floridas, or the Eastern bank to the mouth, it was not long ago an easy affair, and the irregular conduct of Spain furnished the fairest pretence for doing ourselves justice in the modern style.

The affection of attachment to the 2nd article of the convention by the [2]French Government was nothing but *une*

[1]New Orleans is on the east bank of the Mississippi. Owing to the difficulties of long hauls by land, especially over mountains, it was necessary for the Western people to have the navigation of the Mississippi free. As the transports on the river and its tributaries were not built of sufficient strength to go to sea, Spain had granted for three years, continued afterward without special agreement, the right of deposit at New Orleans of merchandise *in transitu*. The news that France had obtained the rights of Spain in the Louisiana Territory, coupled with the boundless ambition of Napoleon, stirred our people very deeply. It made the purchase by the United States very popular in most quarters.

[2]The Convention mentioned was that with France in 1800. France, it appears, wished not to surrender her rights under former treaties, begin-

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ruse diplomatique; all they urged that had the semblance of argument, resolved itself simply into this, that if they agreed to our form of ratification *purement et simplement* they would absolutely and forever abandon their claim to treaties, while we would reserve our claim to idemnities. The seeming force of this argument is derived from the false ground that the claims and disputes of Nations are settled by judicial maxims; the truth is they saw the awkward situation into which the business was cast, and wished to make the most of its [1]retrenchment. As the latter part of that article stipulated "that the treaties should cease to operate until the two nations had agreed to those points deferred," it removed all objections to the operation of the British treaty as to an asylum for privateers and prizes, and in fact contained the consent of France to the contingent operations of those articles then becoming absolute; it was their part of that article which was unpleasant to them, and it formed unquestionably a very natural ground of objection.

Pray let me know something about the proposed financial reforms—is everything to be reduced to the simple trash!! Where will this business end. I will be greatly obliged to you, when you have it in your power, such documents as may be seen by the sovereign people, and which might enable me to form some judgment whereabouts we are.—Make my best respects to your daughter and believe me very sincerely and respectfully

Yours

W. R. DAVIE.

N. B. Be assured of my discretion,
nothing you write shall ever be put into the press.

John Steele, Esquire.

ning with that of 1778, which had been the subject of dispute between the nations for years. The indemnities we claimed were for spoliations of our commerce.

The British Treaty referred to was Jay's Treaty of 1794.

[1]Retrenchment seems to mean suppression or curtailment.

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I beg your attention to an alteration proposed by the Postmaster General in carrying from here the western mail, it is perhaps an inadvertence perhaps worse, I do not know Mr. Murray's residence, pray direct the enclosed for me.

HALIFAX March 13th 1802.

My Dear Sir,

I am much obliged to you for your favor of the 30th of Jany. I had the pleasure of writing to you some time ago, and committing to your patronage two Gentlemen whose claims upon our Government must be acknowledged by every impartial man, having no means of serving them myself, I felt a pleasure in leaving in your hands the agreeable office of relieving and rewarding suffering merit.

As to the metallic substances left by my *ci-devant* Colleague in you care, I will be obliged to you to give them to Mr. [1]Alston our member of Congress when he is coming home, he will be kind enough to take charge of them, as I have the honor to be one of his constituents, and one of the sovereign people.

The Bill repealing the judiciary law of the last session, I am informed, has passed, and will no doubt receive the sanction of the President; as the avowed object of this man is to effectuate the removal of the Judges, the Constitution is no longer considered by Congress in any other light, than that in which Doctor Swift represents the Holy Scriptures, when he likens them to a loose pair of trousers, which any man with a little tugging may draw over his backside: indeed all Constitutions are useless, if the doctrines of Mr. [2]Brecken-

[1]Philip Alston, of Halifax, repeatedly member of the State Senate and House of Commons; was a Representative in Congress, 1803–1815, and 1825–1831. Davie opposed him in 1803, without success.

[2]John Breckenridge, member of the Kentucky Legislature, and Senator of the United States, 1801–1805; Attorney General, 1805–1806. With Jefferson and Nicholas he draughted the "Kentucky Resolutions" and was the introducer of them into the legislature.

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ridge are to be supported by the ruling party; and that celebrated instrument vaunted as "the world's best hope" is no more than an old woman's story.—What course will things take? How long will the Lilliputian ties of the public debt etc. etc. hold us together?—Pray let me hear from you and believe me with great respect, sincerely yours

W. R. DAVIE.

John Steele, Esquire.

HALIFAX, Aug. 20th 1802.

My Dear Sir

I have to acknowledge not only the receipt of your letter of the 21st ulto., but the pleasure it gave me also, the appointment of Mr. [2]Burnett to the Consulate of Antwerp is a reparation which Administrations seldom make either for their injustice or mistakes; and I now flatter myself with a hope that you will be able to offer something for the [2]Quondam Major—Poor fellow Providence seems determined that he shall have occasion for all the resources nature has furnished him with, or that he has acquired by experience.

We have been so long in the habit of contemplating or expecting great events, deciding the fate of nations; that it is almost impossible to avoid feeling some *ennui* amidst the present calm—a friend said to me the other day "our situa-

[1]The public men in the early days of the Union were continually having visions of the extreme sickness and even death of the Constitution. Nathaniel Macon was firmly persuaded of its untimely demise before he left the Senate. Such gloomy forebodings can be found in letters of many others.

[2]I have been unable to discover the facts concerning "Mr. Burnett" or the "quondam Major." The short description by Davie of the latter suits many men of his period—and our own.

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tion would be really insupportable if it was not for [1]Duane, [2]Callender, and the [3]President."

Our Government from certain constitutional causes will never do what it ought, *at the time* it ought to be done; the complaints we had against Spain were sufficient to have warranted any measures that our Government might have taken to secure to us the mouth of the Mississippi; and the Floridas ought now to be purchased at any price.

I have long observed your reserve in writing, and supposed there existed objections as you say beyond the mere drudgery —I have regretted it, and did not doubt as to the motives being prudential—I set out for [4]Bethlehem with one of my daughters about the first of October and hope either going or returning to have the pleasure of seeing you at Washington. The death of Mrs. [5]Davie has devolved upon me the whole

[1]Duane (William) was editor of the Aurora in Philadelphia, a Republican paper; a man with a sharp, abusive and able pen. When the militia was called out to suppress the Fries riots he criticised their conduct so severely that he was whipped by some officers. He was indicted under the Sedition Act, but not convicted. He accused the United States Senate of the attempt to frustrate the popular will of Pennsylvania. For this he was brought before the bar of the Senate for a "false, defamatory, scandalous and Malicious publication," and "a high breach of its privileges." He refused to appear. His arrest was ordered, but he secreted himself and the close of the session ended the case.

[2]Callender (Thomas) published a pamphlet called the "Prospect Before Us." Judge Samuel Chase by harsh means procured his indictment for a seditious publication. The Judge was so domineering that the prisoner's counsel abandoned the case. He was convicted and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment, a fine of $200 and to give security for good behavior.

[3]It is impossible for us at this day to realize the hatred the Federalists had for President Jefferson, and their fear of his radicalism.

[4]Bethlehem, on Lehigh river in Pennsylvania, was settled by the Moravians in 1741 It has long had a school for females of great reputation. Lehigh University was located there in 1865.

[5]General Davie married Sarah Jones, daughter of General Allen Jones, niece of Willie Jones, and granddaughter of Robin Jones, Attorney-General prior to the Revolution. She is buried at Halifax in the village cem-

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care of my children; I am therefore at present confined to this spot, and my health has been bad ever since my return from So. Carolina in the spring.

My best respects to your family, and believe me very sincerely and respectfully

Yours,

W. R. DAVIE.

General John Steele, Esquire.

HALIFAX, May 2, 1803.

SIR,

BEING informed that it is the wish of the Citizens of this District, that I would offer as a Candidate at the approaching Election for a Representative in Congress, I beg the favour of you to inform your neighbors that I am willing to serve them in that capacity, if they should think proper to elect me.

I desire that it may be clearly understood, that I never have, and that I never will, surrender my principles to opinions of any man, or description of men, either in or out of power; and that I wish no man to vote for me, who is not willing to leave me free to pursue the good of my Country according to the best of my judgment, without respect either to party men or party views.

I am very respectfully,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

W. R. DAVIE.

etery. She had three daughters, Mary Hayne, who married —— Crockett of Texas; Sarah Jones, wife of William F. DeSaussure, United States Senator; and Martha Rebecca, who married Dr. C B. Jones of South Carolina.

[1]Notwithstanding his high standing Jeffersonian Republicanism was too strong for him. There are traditions that the canvass against him was conducted on a despicably low plane, principally against his alleged

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To this a [1]postscript was afterwards added..... to the charge that I was attempting a monarchical form of Government.

HALIFAX June 9th 1805.

Dear Sir

I returned here from So. Carolina on the 5th and had the pleasure to find your letter of the 16th of April and thank you for your kind concern respecting my Health. I have now again been two weeks on the road, and return perfectly worn down: my constitution cannot bear that degree of suffering, privation and incessant toil, which when I enjoyed youth and health only gave me spirits and pleasure. — Everything must yield to Time, and I have submitted with as good a grace as possible. My Plan of life is to be completely changed, and those measures which are to lead me to a *Repose* I have long sighed for, and which is becoming every day more necessary for me are to commence this fall.— This plan involves some painful sacrifices, but they are necessary and indispensable.— A separation from friends to whom my Heart has been tenderly attached for many years is among the most painful of all these; I anticipate it, I feel it as a prelude to that last separation to which the laws of our Nature compel us to submit. About the 1st of November I propose to set out for South Carolina with a view to reside permanently on my Estate there; whether I shall pass through Raleigh or go by the [2]Ridge, is not yet decided. If I

aristocratic habits at his home and elsewhere. It was charged that his dress and ways were acquired in his recent trip abroad and showed that he was under "foreign influence."

[1]We have not the words of this postscript.

[2]The road by "the ridge," went through Granville County, then along the present route of the North Carolina Railroad. It "headed" many of the streams and was probably a more eligible route than that through Raleigh.

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take the former route I shall have the pleasure of seeing you *once more.*

I expected to be at the University at Commencement, but I am obliged to carry my second daughter to 'Salem about the 25th of July, the time the Superintendent has fixed for her reception and in my situation, you will easily perceive, two journies cannot be made. The situation of the University is a distressing one, and the more so, as it is not likely to be soon capable of any Remedy, being the necessary consequence of Legislative hostility to the Institution. The friends of science in other States regard the people of North Carolina as a sort of Semi-Barbarians, among whom neither learning, virtue nor men of Science possess any Estimation. The conduct of the Legislature for several years past has stamped this character on the State, and it will take a long course of time, and contrary conduct and policy to efface the impression.

In South Carolina a Professorship is more eagerly canvassed for than a Secretaryship in the Government of the U. S., the consequence of that liberal spirit which has been displayed by their Assembly; after a handsome and permanent endowment of the offices of the Institution, they voted $10,000., to purchase a Library and Philosophical apparatus — What a contrast!! Poor No. Carolina!

As to procuring a professor of languages, I can only advise that the Enquiry be kept up, and as much of this as possible thrown on the President, who indeed is the proper person to make the choice of inferior officers, as the whole responsibility of the management of the Institution turns personally upon him.

I wrote to you last about the 9th of February, I don't

[1]The excellent School for Females at Salem under the charge of the Moravians was opened in 1802.

The "second daughter" was Sarah Jones, who married Hon. Wm. F. DeSaussure, and left many descendants through her daughters, Mrs. Boykin and Mrs. Burroughs of S. C.

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know whether you rec'd the letter, it was intended to go with Mr. 'Craven, and missed that conveyance, and was I believe put into the post-office. Adieu my dear friend, and be assured you possess the warmest affections of my Heart.

Yours,

W. R. DAVIE.

P. S. The above letter contained [2]Genl. Jones rects. for you. Write me if you got it.

To

JOHN HAYWOOD, Esq.,
Raleigh.

HALIFAX, Sept. 22nd 1805.

My Dear Sir

I had the pleasure to receive by the last post your letter of the 10th inst. and those of the 26th of June and 1st of July in the course of conveyance, these two last I should have answered sooner, but I wished to decide, before I wrote, whether I should pass through Raleigh on my way to So. Carolina as you had kindly proposed to meet me somewhere if I did not.—My arrangements are now made to pass thro' Raleigh about the 7th or 8th of November when I hope to have the pleasure of seeing you.

The late unfortunate occurrence at the University is much to be lamented on many accounts, and most of all for the ill-advised measure of the [3]ordinance which gave birth to the

[1]John Craven, of Halifax, was State Comptroller, 1783–1808.

[2]Allen Jones and Willie Jones were brothers. Allen was a militia General in the Revolution. He was Davie's father-in-law. Willie held high position in the State and Confederation. His public views were those of Jefferson.

[3]This ordinance, which forced a majority of the best students to leave the institution, required the Faculty to appoint a Monitor from each class, who should take an oath before a judicial officer to report every infraction

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conduct adopted by the students. You will remember, no doubt, that an ordinance of this kind was rejected several years ago on a full consideration by the Board, on the ground that the principle was improper. These Monitors under the ordinance are not a species of Magistrates, but *real spies*, and human nature revolts from the principle of Espionage in every shape: the corruption and depravity of London, Paris, and other large cities renders its adoption necessary by the police, but the most degraded wretch in these sinks of Depravity could not be induced to accept it as a public office, and always stipulates for the most part profound secrecy with regard to his employment. I do not believe that the duty of Monitors or Censors has ever been carried further in any literary Institution, than to note the absences from prescribed duties such as attendance on recitations prayers Church etc.

With regard to my advice as to this unhappy occurrence itself, I should have advised that the ordinance should have been suspended as to its operation till the annual meeting of the Board, when it will probably be repealed altogether. And with regard to the students whose conduct in this instance forms a most dangerous precedent; I think, with proper deference to the late act of the Trustees, that discriminations with regard to readmission, should have been adopted on some principle, such as the degree of guilt, or the age, or the standing of the student.

I have reflected much and seriously since this event on the causes of this spirit of insubordination and the means of preventing it.—It has always existed in a considerable degree, the ordinance may be considered as only an accidental cause, I think the real causes may be found in the defects of domestic education in the So. States, the weakness of parental authority, the spirit of the Times, the arrangement as to

of the by-laws and species of misconduct among the students. The Trustees, when this ordinance was resisted, modified it by substituting a pledge of honor for the oath, but the students refused to accept the change,

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vacation, and some errors of the Board which I will notice hereafter.

Every man of discernment who has lived 40 or 50 years must have observed and lamented the general decay of parental authority, and the consequent presumption and loose manners of young men, Boys of 16 or 17 years, without judgment, without experience or almost any knowledge of any kind arrogantly affect to judge for themselves, their teachers and their parents in matters of morality, of Government, of Education, in fact in every thing. The effect of the other general cause is visible throughout the whole of their remonstrance.—Nothing can be more ridiculous than *Boys at school* talking of "sacred regard to their rights," "the high and imposing duty of resistance," and of "denouncing laws", etc. etc., the general Slang of the times culled from the columns of Newspapers, yet these very words are attended with the most mischievous consequences. Over all these causes however the Board of Trustees have no power or influence, but they must be considered to be counteracted as far as possible.

I have understood and observed ever since the establishment of the University that the disturbances have generally manifested themselves about this period of the second session, and that when a general resistance to authority did not take place, a spirit of Insubordination always showed itself more or less at this season. This I attribute to the great length of time the students have been confined at Colledge; they become tired and disgusted with study, their minds generally acquire a sour gloomy and restive temperament, producing a general predisposition to any measure that may break up the session, or interrupt business and distress the Faculty. Two or three fellows more daring and unprincipled than the rest seize on this Disposition, and artfully turn it into the channel of a general revolt against all authority: To Remedy this Evil I would earnestly recommend that an ordinance should be passed at the next annual meeting estab-

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lishing the vacations exactly on the same footing as they are at Princeton whatever they may be, and Mr. Caldwell can give the necessary information, they are the result of Experience and have been found to answer the purpose, if you approve of this I would advise that President Caldwell should be requested to prepare so much of the ordinance as may relate to any alterations in the division of the courses of studies, Examinations, etc.

The difficulty we have continually experienced in the management of youth at this Institution has often obliged me to reflect on the means we have used, and the nature of the Government of such Institutions———. I am now fully convinced the best governed Colleges are those which have the most respectable Faculties, and the fewest *written* [1]laws, and that we have committed a serious error in making an ordinance for *every thing*, or in other words legislating too much. ———It is now my opinion, that after describing the kind of punishment to be used in the Establishment, and reserving in all cases the punishment of *Expulsion* to be confirmed by the Board, all the rest should be left to the *discretion* of the Faculty. It may perhaps require some reflection to see the justice of this remark, and I will only add, that the principles of the parental Government are the true model for that of literary Institutions for youth of all kinds from the University down to the common school. The parental Government has no written laws, and I would observe, that no mortal man could govern his family if he adopted that mode——— If he did, his whole household would become, like these students,

[1]General Davie's advice to trust little to by-laws, and leave the discipline to the Faculty was far ahead of his time. We now practically go still further. The regulation of the conduct of students is left to the President and Dean, with power to consult an Executive Committee, or the Faculty when they deem best.

This letter has a pathetic interest as being the last word spoken by General Davie—the legacy of his experience and good-will. His labors were greatly appreciated and the title, "Father of the University," given by the Board, was in recognition of them.

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lawyers and legislators, discussing his ordinances, chattering about "their rights", "despotism", "duty of resistance", etc. etc. They would form themselves into revolutionary committees, and be always deliberating, remonstrating, and revolting.

I have been led to doubt whether our practice of publishing in the news-papers annually the distinctions made at examinations may not be attended with consequences which if not the immediate causes, operate at least powerfully with other remote causes to produce many difficulties we have experienced. The objects of this measure were to excite emulation among the students, gratify the parents and attract public attention to the Institution, but I apprehend that it has also had the effect of filling the young men with presumption, and a vain imaginary consequence, which had an ill effect upon their own conduct afterwards, and gave them a pernicious influence among their fellow students; and then the mischief it produces greatly overbalances any good to be expected from it: and perhaps it would be better to adopt hereafter the practice of other Colleges who notice in the papers the commencement honors only: and other reasons of considerable weight might be given for this measure. That it is dangerous to depart from the paths of Experience is a Truth I am more and more convinced of every day I live.

I was sorry to see a long piece in the .....

(Unable to make out rest of letter)

To John Haywood, Esquire,
Raleigh, No. Carolina.

P. S.

It will be much time before I can sell the land of Mr. Jones. I went to see General Jones after receipt of your letter but he was too sick to discuss it. I will write to you in a few days.

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LANDS-FORD, near Lancaster Ct. House,
Jany. 22nd 1806.

Dear Sir

Since Colonel [1]Moore departed from here on Sunday last I have found another file of the papers relative to the subject of the boundary, they consist principally of the representations of the Assembly to Governor Martin relative to the Extension of the line under the order of June 1771; and altho' the dissatisfaction shown by these documents on the part of No. Carolina might not now vary the legal merits of the case yet I regret very much that I had not laid my hands upon them before Col. Moore set out.

I wish you may be fortunate enough to terminate this affair to the satisfaction of both States, and beg you to present my respects to the other [2]Commissioners, and accept of the asurances of the esteem and regards

of your most ob. &

W. R. DAVIE

General John Steele,
Charlotte, N. C.

LANDSFORD Nov. 25th, '07.

Dear Sir,

Mr. Caldwell informs me that you propose going to Columbia on his return to Salisbury; I should be extremely happy to see you at my [3]House, and it is as direct a route as you can

[1]Col. Moore was probably Roger Moore, who was in the House of Commons from New Hanover in 1806. He was a scion of the family descended from Governor Yeamans, Governor James Moore, Colonel Maurice Moore, Judge Maurice Moore, and Judge Alfred Moore

[2]The Commissioners on the part of North Carolina were General Steele, Montford Stokes and Robert Burton. Stokes became Senator of the United States and Governor of the State. Burton had been a member of the Congress of the Confederation. The scientific expert was President Joseph Caldwell of the University.

[1]General Davie's country place was called Trivoli.

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take. I shall flatter myself with the expectation of seeing you, the direct way is to cross at the old nation ford.

Make my best respects to your family and believe me with great respect,

Yours,

W. R. Davie.

General Steele,
Salisbury, N. C.

LANDS-FORD Jany. 4th, 1810.

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to acknowledge your letter of the 26th Novm., the anxious hope I entertained that some light would be thrown upon the gloomy circumstances to which it refers by the communications to Congress or their discussions induced me to defer answering it. I was too remote from Head-quarters to possess a sufficient knowledge of the particular views and opinions of the men who now hold the destiny of our Country in their Hands, and the whims and prejudices of politicians so often influence their public conduct and are so generally the real springs which actuate them that it is extremely difficult, as you know, to form any judgment of the course and direction they may give to public affairs, which are eternally more or less mingled with their private views.

The late discourse of the views of the [1]British Cabinet and the foolish conduct of Jackson has again aroused the war party into activity; whether they will be successfully opposed by the torpor, into which the national feeling seems to have sunk, the determination imputed to the President, and the efforts of the remaining friends of Peace, I know not—— War speeches have now in a great measure lost their effect, they are like "a tale that has been told"; the People are smarting under the effects of the embargo and non-

[1]See note to letter of Feby' 10, 1812.

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intercourse policy, and dread War as still a worse evil, they must always feel before they will begin to think: and most of us have had our pecuniary sensibilities considerably excited.

As to the two Great Belligerent Powers, I see no hope of any radical or material change of policy to be expected from either of them with regard to the U. States. On an *entire* change of the B. Ministry some modification of their orders might be expected, but their principle will be maintained, and I think the Emperor will adhere to his "Text" till he can find a more successful mode of carrying on the War against Congress.

My hope rests upon the President, I sincerely believe he is a man of great virtue, we all know he has sense and the experience of many years in public life, and *they now* say he has more promptitude and decision than any man who ever filled the Presidential Chair; May God grant that this may be true; Our affairs may yet do well——and this pause operate no injury.

Enclosed I forward to you the proceedings of our Legislature with regard to the boundary——Tell me what you will do——.

Write to me——I am sorry we are so far from each other ——and believe me with great regard and esteem

Your friend

W. R. Davie.

General John Steele
Salisbury, N. C.

Landsford, Catawba.
Jany. 10th 1812.

Dear Sir,

I have the pleasure to acknowledge your letter of the 25th of November, and beg you to present my thanks to the

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President, Faculty and Trustees of the University of North Carolina for this mark of their polite attention, and to assure them of the high sense I entertain of the honor they have been pleased to confer upon me, with my warmest wishes for the success of the institution.

I pray you Sir, also to accept my thanks for the polite manner in which you have been pleased to communicate this act of the Board.

I am very respectfully
Sir
Your Most Obt.,
[1]W. R. DAVIE.

[2]Robt. Williams, Esq.,
Secretary of the Board of Trustees,
University of North Carolina.

CATAWBA near Lancaster Ct. House, Aug. 15, '08.

My Dear Sir,

I had the pleasure to receive by the last post yours of the 8th and congratulate you on your narrow and providential escape from such imminent danger, I know no situation in which a man may more easily lose a limb or his life than that in which you was exposed.

I regret exceedingly the arrangement which prevented your spending a day with me, during which I had promised myself the pleasure of comparing our views of the various

[1]The letter of Davie is in acknowledgement of the degree of Doctor of Laws (LL.D.) granted in 1812. He was the first on whom this degree was conferred. The like degree was conferred on Ashbel Green, D.D. in 1812, and next honored was in 1825, Nathaniel Macon—only three Doctorates of Laws in the first thirty years of the existence of the University.

[2]General Robert Williams was Secretary and Treasurer of the University from 1809 to 1821. He was brother of Congressman Lewis Williams, "Father of the House" of Representatives of the United States. He was Adjutant General of this State.

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aspects of the political horizon; never in my opinion was the situation of the country more critical, or our prospects more pregnant with danger: [1]Negotiation leads every where into difficulties, war points to incalculable evils, and the Embargo, as terrapin-hostilities, to the depression of the public mind and the gradual but certain ruin of our financial resources.

What have we to hope from a feeble and timid administration? Providence has stamped a kind of awful character on the events of the present times, which seems to have appalled the firmest minds, and chained the energies of the nations; neither the government nor the people of Europe appear to have had any adequate ideas of the terrible destiny which awaited them, until their fate was irrevocably fixed: in this fatality, if there is such a thing, it is eminently conspicuous in the conduct and destruction of [2]Prussia and [3]Spain: but without resorting to the mysterious workings of a chastising Providence to explain the errors and misfortunes of men; may not the calamities of these kingdoms be fairly attributed to the imbecility and ignorance of their princes, and the timidity and corruption of their ministers; observe the devious temporising policy of Prussia since '95, and the abject slavish condescension of Spain—. Prussia never thought of assistance till it was useless, when it resembled the instinctive efforts of despair, and the government of Spain had submitted, till it knew not how to resist.— Now compare the policy of the United States since 1800 with the course pursued by these

[1]General Davie's comparison of the United States making war on England and France by shutting up her ports and cutting off intercourse, to a terrapin, is obvious to one who has witnessed that interesting animal withdrawing head, feet and tail within its shell.

[2]By the Peace of Tilsit in 1807 Prussia's territory was reduced from 89,120 to 46,032 square miles and she was made to pay an indemnity of $28,000,000. Until payment was made she had to support 150,000 French troops

[3]In May, 1808, Napoleon forced the King and heir of the Spanish monarchy to cede their rights to Joseph, his brother. He sent a great army into the country.

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unfortunate Monarchies, mark their character and analogies look at our interior arrangements, examine the course of our negotiations, and the state of our foreign relations, and observe the presiding spirit of our government, and tell me frankly if we are not directed in the same perilous track, by the same means, to the same dreadful destiny. Has not [1]war with France been a probable event for some time past, is it not *now* inevitable, has it not been the policy of our government to lull us to sleep with regard to the designs of this formidable Power, is it wise to wait with folded arms to see what good or rather *evil* time may bring forth, or has not the crisis arrived which demands decision, and when the worst part we could take would be that of not taking any?—I have fallen insensibly into the train of reflection upon which I wished we should have occupied the day you promised me.

As to the Presidency Madison will certainly be elected, and he is the best choice that could be made among the present [2]candidates.— Mr. Jefferson will assuredly leave our affairs involved in the utmost confusion and difficulty: it is therefore of great importance, that the President should be the person whose measures would recieve the most general support. No effort will be made in this State to counteract the Congressional nomination, nor I think in Georgia. As to the V. P. (Vice President) the [3]Demo'cts are not satisfied with Gov. Clinton, if they knew how they might decently, or rather *safely* shake him off; there will be some intriguing on the meeting of Congress; but Madison's friends are committed

[1]In a private letter Jefferson said, "England seems to have become a den of pirates and France a den of thieves "

[2]When the electoral votes were counted Madison received 128, George Clinton 6, and C. C Pinckney 47. George Clinton for Vice President had 113, Rufus King 47, and 15 were scattering.

[3]By Democrats Davie means Republicans. The original name of the party was Democratic-Republican. When the Democrats of France went into the Reign of Terror and became odious, for policy's sake the name Republican was adopted by Jefferson and other leaders.

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and they will risk nothing. I think [1]Mr. K—— in any event stands no chance; the [2]P———, with everything that is virtuous and valuable have sunk below the political horizon.

I am happy that you have settled the disputes about the Boundray, the [3]Convention is not to be published till the Legislature meets, when I will write you how it is received. We have been extremely dry since I saw you, and crops are greatly injured, the cotton especially has suffered. Write to me, and may God take care of you, these evil times, and believe me sincerely yours,

W. R. DAVIE.

General John Steele,
Salisebury.

LANDS-FORD, Catawba.
Feby. 10th 1812.

Dear Sir,

I had the pleasure to receive your letter from Raleigh, and begin to believe with you that we shall be plunged in war, the discussions with the [4]British minister, the message of the

[1]"Mr. K." is probably Rufus King. The "P" is probably Charles Cotesworth Pinckney.

[2]Pinckney and his brother, Thomas Pinckney, and their cousin, Charles Pinckney—all "virtuous and valuable."

[3]Acts were passed and Commissioners appointed to run the dividing line between North Carolina on one part and South Carolina and Georgia on the other in 1803, again in 1804, 1806, 1808, 1813, 1814, and as to South Carolina, settled in 1815. As to Georgia the final settlement was in 1819.

[4]David Montague Erskine, British Minister, more friendly to the United States, perhaps, because his wife was an American, had promised the President that his country would repeal the "Orders in Council" which bore so heavily on our commerce, if the United States would suspend as to England the Non-intercourse act. The offer was accepted and there was great rejoicing. Erskine's action was disavowed by the British Ministry and Charles James Jackson was sent in his stead. The Orders in Council were renewed and Jackson contradicted the Secretary of State so rudely and pointedly that Congress requested by resolution the President to recognize him no longer. He is the minister alluded to in this letter.

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President and the report of the Committee of Foreign relations, have placed the Government in a situation from which it cannot retreat, without absolute disgrace; they are exactly in the condition of Macbeth, there is more personal danger in going back than marching on——I mean to their *popularity*. If we can steer clear of an alliance with France, upon the whole, perhaps it will be better, two or three rattling fights, 30 or 40,000 thousand men killed, and a debt of as many million will bring us all to our senses——You will remember some years ago giving me your serious opinion that we must touch the extreme point of public wretchedness before the people could be set right.

There was really no difference of opinion on the subject you mention, you extend your views further as to our administration than I did, because you know them personally and perfectly, and I know nothing about them——I still consider the British orders a part of their system of [1]blockade, no more than the extension of the same principle, the mode only was suggested by [2]Bonaparte, whose Genius is a little bolder than that of the British Ministry.

We poor planters are much "bothered" here to know what to do, we depend entirely on foreign commerce and are now perfectly at a loss. What are you going to plant this year, what can we best do——Present my best respects to the fam-

[1]The blockades of the Napoleonic wars would be considered illegal now. France and Great Britain both declared the coasts of each other in a state of blockade, and neutral vessels, bound for their respective ports, were liable to capture. This action worked peculiar hardships on the United States, large numbers of whose vessels were seized and condemned with their cargoes. At the present time a blockade is not lawful unless a sufficient force is stationed at the blockaded port to capture under ordinary circumstances vessels seeking to enter.

[2]Napoleon in 1806 by the Berlin Decree prohibited trade with Great Britain. The next year by Order in Council, (the Privy Council), Great Britain prohibited direct trade with any country under the control of France.

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ily and let me hear from you, and believe me with the warmest attachment and respects yours, etc.,

W. R. DAVIE.

We have now a post-office at this place; and I seldom send to Lancaster.

To General John Steele.

LANDS-FORD, Nov. 29th '14.

My dear Sir,

I have had the intention of writing to you for two or three weeks past on the subject of the communications from our Commissioners at [1]Ghent, but the alarming proceedings at home, the [2]movements in the New England States, and the monstrous strides towards despotism made by the party in power have absolutely so stunned and astonished me that I know not what to say or write. After the best reflections I could make on the views and measures of our Eastern brethren I came to the conclusion, that weary of the tyranny of the Virginia Administrations, seeing no possibility of change, and disgusted with a government in which they had no practical share, and of course no influence, they had been wrought up to the determination to secede from the Union. And I now think that the immense army to be raised, the heavy taxes proposed, the vast and profligate expenditure of public money, followed up by the conscriptions will confirm any resolutions

[1]The Commissioners of Peace at Ghent were: Henry Clay, of Kentucky, John Quincy Adams, of Massachusetts, Albert Gallatin, of Pennsylvania, James A. Bayard, of Delaware, and Jonathan Russell, of Massachusetts.

[2]The blockading of all our coasts, but New England, by Great Britain, the mysterious secrecy of the Hartford Convention, the refusal of the Governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut to allow their militia to go outside their states, together with the general hostility to the war in New England, gave the impression that Secession was to be attempted. Then too the feeling against the Federalists was intensified by the story that they burned blue lights at night as signals to the British vessels.

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of this kind that they may have taken. It really appears to me that the present confederacy will not last two years more and that Mr. Madison will finish his career amidst the ruins of his Country. Perhaps these views of the subject may have preyed too much upon my mind, and by that process have assumed an aspect more gloomy than it should be, I should be happy however to have your opinion.

As to the 'Conscription proposed I feel no hesitation in pronouncing it unconstitutional, and that such a power in the General Government must soon crush the State sovereignties to atoms, and annihilate the Liberties of the people: and I am certain, I hazard nothing in saying that had the constitution contained a plain clause conferring such a power on the General Government, that it would not have been adopted by a single state in the Union.

The vassals of Virginia may perhaps quietly submit their necks to the yoke, but it will certainly be resisted in every other part of the U. States.

Let me know what you think of these things and believe me with respect and regard yours

W. R. DAVIE.

LAND-FORD Octo. 15th 1812.

Dear Sir,

I suppose that the melancholy issue of the invasion of upper Canada, and the prospects of a disastrous war, connected with the pressure of private difficulties must have commenced a change of opinion among many of the democratic party in No. Carolina, the people must feel before they will think or reflect, or endeavor to trace public calamnities to their real causes,

'There was no Conscription Act passed, though a draft from the militia was proposed. The forcing of citizens into the army was done by both the Union and Confederate Congresses duringthe Civil War and the question of constitutionality is settled.

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but under circumstances like the present, when a change does commence its progress will be rapid and its effects decisive: whether the short period between this time and the Presidential election will be sufficient to enable the friends of peace and commerce in No. Cara. to avail themselves of its full effect I know not; much however will depend on exertion, and the dissemination of information; you have long known my opinion, that nothing is done while Virginia maintains her present ascendency in the confederacy, and that our political liberties and our prosperity depend upon our raising up a competent rival to her ambitious pretensions.

The present moment is in many respects highly favorable, and I sincerely hope you will give your aid to organize the means of effecting this great object, which in my opinion would insure us peace, commerce and prosperity——The war however to be lamented was the only cure for our domestic evils; if they levy money sufficient to carry it on with vigor to ensure even partial success, the taxes will do the business, if they permit the war to languish for want of means, disaster and disgrace must be the consequence and an accumulated debt without any equivalent, the people will be disgusted and general dissatisfaction will ensue; any way the party in power must be ruined: but it would shorten the period of our sufferings if [1]Clinton could now be elected, in that case I have no doubt, Peace would immediately take place, the Union be preserved, and the towering pretensions of Virginia be repressed perhaps forever; pray write me what are your pros-

[1]During the War of 1812 the Americans lost Detroit and Chicago and failed in an invasion of Canada by way of Niagara. Davie was not, however, a true prophet. Madison was reelected by a vote of 131 over 89 for De Witt Clinton and Eldridge Gerry obtained the Vice-Presidency by 128 over 89 for Jared Ingersoll. If the Republicans made mistakes the Federalists made greater. The people were persuaded that they mourned over our victories and rejoiced over our defeats, and that they contributed to those defeats by factious opposition to the Government.

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pects, and what are the views of the Federalists in No. Carolina, and believe me with great respect

sincerely yours

W. R. DAVIE.

We have a post-office at this place direct to
LAND-FORDS, Catawba, via Camden.

LANDS-FORD, Feby. 4th 1814.

My Dear Sir,

I am anxious to hear your opinion of the prospect before us, and whether you think the [1]Administration are seriously desirous of peace, and have made up their minds to adopt the basis proposed by the British Government in their late overture: the late addition to the Mission augurs illy I think of its result; Clay is a clamourous advocate for the continuance of the war and the conquest of the Canadas. Russell is a time-serving wretch, added in my opinion to affect the secret views of the Cabinet, by dividing the vote of the Commision, whenever it may be necessary for that purpose; thus it is true he may neutralize the violence and policy of Clay, if the Cabinet are really determined upon peace, but a mission thus constituted will move awkwardly and always with embarrassment, there will be no affinity of principle or accordance of views, and of course no mutual confidence.

The terrible military and political reverses which Bonaparte has experienced during the last year, cannot fail to have a salutary influence upon our Cabinet, and their tone in negotiating will rise or fall with the prospect of his fortunes.

I have been greatly surprised that no motion has been made by the minority in Congress to promote an enquiry into the abuses of expenditure in the army departments, they have cer-

[1]Notwithstanding Davie's fears the Treaty of Peace was signed December 24th, 1814

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tainly been enormous, and such an enquiry is necessary to prevent their continuance, and would have the effect of attracting the attention, and opening the eyes of the people — I wish you would write to [1]Pearson or some of your friends on this head——*This is the moment*——for every beneficial purpose——.

A peace at this time would save the party from ruin–It Mr. Madison views it in this light, Peace we shall certainly have, so infatuated are the people it is astonishing how little popularity they have lost, by all their [2]mismanagement and blunders.

Let me hear from you soon, and believe me with great respect and regard

Yours

W. R. Davie.

Address to this place via Camden.

To General John Steele,

Salisbury.

P. S.

We have heard much of some [3]salt-works somewhere in Rowan County, the accounts are extremely contradictory, and as it is now a very interesting thing, I would be much obliged to you to give me an account of them, their progress and prospects, we are told they already sell salt at two dollars and are able to make immense quanities every day.

[1]Joseph Pearson was a lawyer at Salisbury; Representative in Congress 1806–1815; fought a duel while a member with J. C. Jackson; was uncle of Chief Justice R. M. Pearson.

[2]That the Republican Party came out of the war, retaining its hold on the favor of the people, seems strange. It was saved by the naval victories, by that of New Orleans, and other engagements of a minor nature, and especially by the glaring blunders of Federalists leaders. Instead of holding up the hands of the administration they indulged in sharp denunciations and perpetual fault-finding. By many, probably the majority of Republicans, they were believed to be aiding the enemy.

[3]Now John S. Henderson, of Salisbury, writes me that he has been unable to ascertain anything about these alleged salt works.

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